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WINE AND ROSES

WINE AND ROSES

BY

VICTOR J. DALEY

AUTHOR OF "AT DAWN AND DUSK"

Edited, with a Memoir,
by Bertram Stevens

LONDON
ANGUS AND ROBERTSON LTD.
1913

Printed by W. C. Penfold & Co., Sydney
for
ANGUS & ROBERTSON LIMITED
Publishers to the University.

LONDON: THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Amen Corner, E.C.

4525
D156w

The verses in this volume have been selected from those written by VICTOR DALEY after the publication of *At Dawn and Dusk*.

"The Woods of Dandenong" first appeared in *The Bookfellow* (1899); "The Quest of Brahma" in *Brooks's Annual*; "Players" in *The Australian Stage Annual*; "Anna" in *The Freeman's Journal*; and all the others in *The Bulletin* or *The Lone Hand*.

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CONTENTS

Memoir	xi.
Romance	1
Anacreon	6
The Woods of Dandenong	7
The Soldan's Daughter	9
The Quest of Brahma	12
Desire	18
Sheelah	22
The Road of Roses	24
Avatar	26
Impression	27
Paudheen's Fairy	28
Spring Song	31
The Land of Laissez Faire	33
Players	39
Blanchelys	41
Over the Wine	46
Bacchanalian	49
The Old Bohemian	52
The Poet and the Muse	55
Adieu, Bohemia!	58
The Requiter	62
Titania	64
The Tryst	65

The Slain 71
Message. 72
Woman 74
Elizabeth 76
The Woman at the Washtub . . . 77
Atlas 80
Freedom and Fate 84
Isis 85
The South Wind 87
The Little House 89
Earth and Sea 91
Tamarama Beach 95
The Muses of Australia 98
When London Calls 102
After Sunset 105
Mavourneen 109
Anna 111
The Green Harper 113
An Old Tune 116
Pictures 118
The Lost Muse 120
The Forest 124
In a Far Country 126
In Arcady 128
The Call of the City 132
"Aux Pauvres Diables!" 135
Dies Faustus 139
Disillusion 142

The Other Side 144
Keepsakes 147
Sorrow Go Down with the Sun! . . . 149
Remonstrance 150
Visions of the Rain 152
The End of the World 154
Faith 156
Philosophy 156
Saint Francis II 156
I.H.S. 157
A Vision of Calvary. 159
Gelimer. 162
Forty Year 164
A New Régime 168
Hygeia 171
The Old Men Sit by Me 173
Ill 176
The Grey Hour 178
To My Soul 179
Finis 182

MEMOIR

Over thirty years ago Victor Daley, then a happy, wondering Irish lad, drifted out to Australia. His head was full of old tunes and fragments of poetry; his pocket was nearly empty. The sunshine and freedom of Australia delighted him, and, in careless, vagabond fashion he enjoyed the fleeting pleasures of the day with little thought of the morrow. A good companion, "a fellow of infinite jest," life to him was a gallant spectacle, which he loved to look at and did not take seriously. Worldly success never tempted him, for he was a Bohemian by birth; but he was also descendant of a bardic sept, and he wanted to be a poet. So he wrote verses charged with the melancholy regret of the Celt for vanished glories and the beauty of remote things, dainty opalescent lyrics with hints of fairy music, witty and ironic verse on passing events, and, occasionally, prose sketches. When the pressure of hard realities brought sorrow into his life he wrote more gaily and vigorously than ever. For twenty years or more he charmed a large number of readers. In this thinly-peopled continent

the makers of verse are numerous, and though Daley never appealed to so large an audience as the ballad writers, he was the writer best beloved of the writing clan.

Daley travelled through life with few *impedimenta*, and left behind no papers from which biographical data could be drawn. The story of his life which follows here may, therefore, be inaccurate in some particulars. He believed that he was born at Navan in the county of Meath, Ireland, on the 5th September, 1858, and that he was christened Victor James William Patrick. The last two names were dropped early in life. His father, a soldier, went to India with his regiment when Victor was an infant. Falling ill there, he sent for his wife and child; and a few weeks after their arrival the three left for home. The father died on the voyage.

For some years afterwards Victor lived with his grandparents, in a district associated with one of the great periods in Ireland's history, and amongst people who were intensely patriotic and learned in fairy lore and legend. Memories of the stories he then heard were vividly retained until the end of his life. Some of them were embodied in articles written for the Sydney *Freeman's Journal,* from which I have taken these passages:—

"In the front garden of my grandmother's house there was a great Fairy thorn. They told me, before I began to know much about history, that Queen Meeva had planted it there with her own white hands. And, indeed, anything was possible in that country. Green Emania—which is now called the Navan Ring—was within arrow-flight of us, and a little more than a mile away was a lonely little tarn in the middle of a field. They called it the King's Stables. The bottom of it was paved with blocks of stone, and many relics of the days of old had been found there by adventurous divers. It was really the site of the Great Rath of the Red Branch Knights. The township is to this day called Creeve Roe (Red Branch). Not far from it, and under the shadow of McCormack's brae, is Lough na Shade (Clear Water) into whose depths no man has ever ventured, because of the Great Snake that is below guarding the crock of gold, which was the treasure of Cormac MacNessa."

". . . . When I was a boy staying out at night, for the love of the thing and the romance of living in a little hazel house of my own on the side of the Rath, I saw the Sidhe—or I thought I saw them, which was the same thing—coming out of the long-choked gates of the Castle of Conchobar,

dressed in green and gold and riding on little white horses on their way to Lough na Shade. Some distance away—five hundred yards or so—from the Rath is a little mound, smooth as the breast of a giantess, that had been ploughed over and sown with corn in the early spring and grown in the last spring, and yellow in the summer, and thick with whispering tongues and listening ears in the autumn. This was once the Speckled House. A Scotchman by the name of Leeman owns the place now, or rather he owned it when I was a boy. My grandfather used to say that, if we had our rights and Cromwell and James the First had never been born, the great house would have been ours, and the Leemans would have been calling at our back door begging some seed potatoes and the loan of a furrow or two from our fine black-soil field in which to plant them. 'Princes in the land we were in the old time,' my grandfather would observe, 'and let neither of you boys ever forget the fact.' I was about eight years old then, and his son—my uncle—was over thirty. . . . . My uncle was a sub-centre of Fenians, and I myself was probably the most violent rebel in the whole county of Armagh."

Daley's mother, who was of Scottish descent, married again and removed to Devonport, England

Victor, about 14 at the time, was sent to the Christian Brothers' school in that town What he valued most afterwards was the privilege to browse at large in the school library, and he then became fired with an enthusiasm for literature. At 16 he passed a Civil Service examination, and entered the Great Western Railway Company's office in Plymouth

After three years, he tired of the work and grew restless. His stepfather had relatives in Adelaide who were childless, and he suggested that it might be a good thing for Victor to join them. Australia appeared to the boy's mind as something like a modern Hy-Brasil, and he gladly agreed to go.

Early in 1878 he reached Sydney; there he left the ship, as he liked the look of the place and thought Adelaide was within easy reach. His slender stock of money dwindled away and he took a job as gardener to a clergyman, although he knew nothing of gardening—as the clergyman soon discovered. Before long he got to Adelaide, where he found employment as a correspondence clerk.

In Adelaide, Daley experimented a good deal in verse and some of his rhymes were printed in a local paper. By chance a love-lyric of his was sent to an office client instead of a letter; remonstrances followed, and Daley left for Melbourne. He had a

vague idea of going on to Noumea, but at a race meeting in Melbourne he lost all his money, and had to turn to free-lance journalism for a living. For a time he was on the staff—in fact, he was all the staff—of a suburban paper. Then some of his verses were printed in Melbourne papers; two striking sonnets appeared in *The Victorian Review*, and Daley became acquainted with the principal writers of the city.

"I met Marcus Clarke once," he said later on in a *Bulletin* article. "Somebody whose name I have forgotten introduced me, and said with pompous sarcasm that I was a young aspirant to literature, and that Marcus had better look after his laurels. I felt furiously ashamed and distressed, but Clarke nodded kindly, shook my hand, and told me that he would say something to me about literature later on. I inferred from the tone of his voice that the information he had to give me would not be pleasant. He never gave it. George Walstab was there, and Garnet Walch and Grosvenor Bunster, and, I think, Bob Whitworth and others. The conversation flowed on. I was in Paradise—a Paradise that smelt of whisky and cigar-smoke, and echoed with light-hearted laughter. I had previously read *La Vie de Bohème*, and I said to myself, 'This is Bohemia,

indeed.' And it was. All good fellows. All good writers. Then, in a pause of the conversation, while they were ordering drinks, or lighting their pipes or something, Marcus Clarke turned to me and asked me what I was doing—meaning I suppose, in that galley. I replied that I was by trade a correspondence clerk. but I was then writing for a suburban paper, and never wanted to be a correspondence clerk again. Some member of the company, who was passing out of the room, tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Don't give away your silk purse for a sow's ear.' I didn't catch his meaning at the moment, but all the others laughed. Now I know why they laughed."

One happy-go-lucky acquaintance of this time, Larry Spruhan—the "half Galahad, half Don Juan" of a poem in *At Dawn and Dusk*—lured Daley away from writing suburban leaders on European politics —"which must have made the iron knees of Bismarck knock with terror." Spruhan was off to prospect for gold, and promised to send for Daley as soon as he had good news. For a week or two, I believe, Daley sold Japanese pottery at the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880. The profit was magnificent, but the tenure of office all too brief. Soon news came from Spruhan at Queanbeyan, N.S.W.—"Struck it rich, come at once." Daley, with a friend named

Caddy, took the train as far north as their funds would allow, and then tramped. They had a number of adventures before they arrived at Queanbeyan and found that Spruhan had disappeared. Daley got a billet on a local paper, and stayed about six months.

Moving on to Sydney, he worked for the expiring *Sydney Punch* and the newly established *Bulletin.* He met Kendall, whose poems he greatly admired, and mixed with the little group of artists and writers who were as an oasis in the desert of money-making people. Writing of them twenty-five years afterwards, he remembered them all as jolly fellows.

"Everybody about town seemed to know everybody else in those days. There were, of course, some of them who did not like each other; but I think that, on the whole, there was more geniality on the streets than there is now. . . . I believe also that there was more real *camaraderie* amongst musicians, artists, pressmen and even actors than there is at the present day. Possibly this was because they were all young—in spirit, if not in years—and doing fairly well without making slaves of themselves."

Somewhere about 1885 Daley went back to Melbourne, and wrote with varying fortune for most of the papers there, as well as for *The Bulletin.*

In 1898 it was arranged to publish a selection of his verses, and in that year he returned to Sydney in connection with the book. *At Dawn and Dusk* was moderately successful. Australian reviewers, almost without exception, praised it highly, and many predicted that it would be warmly received in Britain; but it made no impression there. While Daley's work had a unique place in the regard of Australians, it was, not unnaturally, slighted by British reviewers because of the absence of local colour.

By that time Daley had ceased to care for fame. He had no illusions about the place of his verses in the pageant of poetry. He was satisfied if his writings would earn him enough to live upon, and glad that they had introduced him to the society he liked. Many times in earlier years he had meditated a big work in verse which would express all he had thought about Things-in-General. He began one when staying on the Hawkesbury River in 1884, and the result was printed as "Fragments of a frustrate poem."

> "I yet shall sing my splendid song;
> The world is young, the world is strong"

he cried, and tried again, but found that he was incapable of sustained effort.

Only for brief periods had he tried to do any regular work, apart from literature. After *At Dawn and Dusk* was published, a place was obtained for him in a Government Office in Sydney; but the adding of perpendicular columns of figures and making them agree with horizontal columns was an agony not to be borne. "That way madness lies," he said, and walked out.

From the conventional standpoint his life was a failure. Yet he had practical wisdom and a respect for conventions; if he had tried he might have succeeded, as many lesser men have done. He never cared to try. Life seemed too precious to waste in striving for money or position, and his temperament demanded freedom from routine. He came to know that a bitter price had to be paid for freedom, and he paid it without grumbling. Daley was as unhappy as Charles Lamb if long away from the city, and a vagabond life in town is without the purifying influences which the fresh hand of Nature can bestow. In a city there are many taverns, and at times Daley touched the mire. Yet he remained unsoiled; for he was clean at heart, and, apart from the irregularities of Bohemia, he had no vices. Many stories, grotesque and humorous, have been told about him; and in time to come the Daley of legend may

be a figure resembling the Beloved Vagabond of Locke's romance.

There was nothing riotous in Daley's nature. He confessed that he had never had a grand passion and seldom experienced profound emotion. His colour sense was not opulent; but he thrilled to the beauty of delicate shades, and preferred the faint green dawn to the sunrise, the dusk to the sunset. His talk was excellent. He touched any subject of conversation with a gleaming fancy, and would risk much for a jest. Of his desultory reading he remembered the anecdotes, the picturesque images, the magic phrases, and unconsciously echoed some of them in his own lines. He was a true votary of old world Romance, and some of its glamor he cast over the continuous stream of bright shining verse which flowed from his pen—finely pure, but thin when it was seen running side by side with that broader and more turbulent current which was coloured by Australian soil.

Daley's health failed in 1902, and friends enabled him to take a voyage to the South Sea Islands in the following year. In 1905 it was found that he had consumption. He went to Orange on the New South Wales table-land; he was lonely there, got no better, and returned to

Sydney in the Spring. For months he saw the end coming; his buoyant spirit rode like a cork on a sea of troubles, and he jested in the face of death. He died at Waitara, near Sydney, on the 29th December, 1905, and was buried at Waverley, not far from the dust of those other Celtic spirits which have enriched Australia—Kendall, Dalley and Deniehy.

Light-hearted, brave, generous, but weak of will—the man was finer than his work, and his work is good.

WINE AND ROSES

ROMANCE

They say that fair Romance is dead, and in her cold
grave lying low,
The green grass waving o'er her head, the mould
upon her breasts of snow;
Her voice, they say, is dumb for aye, that once was
clarion-clear and high—
But in their hearts, their frozen hearts, they know
that bitterly they lie.

Her brow of white, that was with bright rose-
garland in the old days crowned,
Is now, they say, all shorn of light, and with a
fatal fillet bound.
Her eyes divine no more shall shine to lead the
hardy knight and good
Unto the Castle Perilous, beyond the dark Enchanted
Wood.

And do they deem, these fools supreme, whose iron
wheels unceasing whirr,
That, in this rushing Age of Steam, there is no
longer room for HER?—
That, as they hold the Key of Gold that shuts or
opens Mammon's Den,
Romance has vanished from the earth and left the
homes and hearts of men?

Yea, some there be who fain would see this
consummation sad and drear,
And set their god Machinery with iron rod to rule
the year.
They go their way, day after day, with forward-
staring, famished eyes,
Whose level glances never stray—fixed fast upon a
sordid prize!

The sun may rise in god-like guise, the stars like
burning seraphs shine,
But, ah, for those sad souls unwise, nor Earth nor
Heaven bears a sign.
All visions fair, in earth and air, they gaze upon
with sullen scorn.
God knows His own great business best; He only
knows why they were born.

They never saw, with sacred awe, the Vision of the
Starry Stream
That is the source of Love and Law; they never
dreamt the Wondrous Dream;
They never heard the Magic Bird, whose strains
the poet's soul entrance;
Their souls are in their money-bags—what should
they know of fair Romance?

She still is here, the fair and dear, and walks the
Earth with noiseless feet;
Her eyes are deep, and dark, and clear, her scarlet
mouth is honey-sweet;
A chaplet fair of roses rare and lordly laurel crowns
her head;
Her path is over land and sea. She is not dead;
she is not dead.

On roads of clay, 'neath skies of grey, though Fate
compel us to advance,
Beyond the turning of the way there sits and waits
for us Romance.
Around yon cape, of lion-shape, that meets the wave
with lion-brow,
A ship sails in from lands unknown; Romance stands
shining on her prow.

At dead of night, a fiery light, from out the heart
of darkness glares;
The engine, rocking in its flight, once more into
the darkness flares;
The train flies fast, the bridge is past; white faces
for a moment gleam—
And at the window sits Romance and gazes down
into the stream.

When first the child, with wonder wild, looks on
the world with shining eyes,
Romance becomes his guardian mild, and tells to him
her stories wise.
And, when the light fades into night, and ended is
this life's short span,
To other wonder-worlds she leads the spirit of the
Dying Man.

Right grim gods be Reality, and iron-handed
Circumstance.
Cast off their fetters, friend! Break free!—and
seek the shrine of fair Romance.
And, when dark days with cares would craze your
brain, then she will take your hand,
And lead you on by greenwood ways unto a green and
pleasant land.

There you will see brave company all making gay
and gallant cheer—
Blanaid the Fair, and Deirdri rare, and Gold
Gudrun and Guinevere;
And Merlin wise, with dreaming eyes, and Tristram
of the Harp and Bow;
While from the Wood of Broceliande the horns of
Elfland bravely blow.

ANACREON

We bought a volume of Anacreon,
  Defaced, mishandled, little to admire,
And yet its rusty clasps kept guard upon
  The sweetest songs, the songs of young desire
Like that great song once sung by Solomon.
My sweetheart's cheeks were peonies on fire:
  We saw by the bright message of his eyes
  That Eros served us in bookseller's guise.
I keep the volume still, but She has gone . . .
  Ah, for the poetry in Paradise!
There's Honey still and Roses on the earth,
And lips to kiss, and jugs to drain with mirth;
And lovers walk in pairs: but She has gone . . .
  Anacreon! Anacreon!

THE WOODS OF DANDENONG

High, clear and high, the soaring skylark sings
Love! Love! Love! the joy of life and woe:
Throbs, throbs his heart, as upward on thrilling wings
Far, far he soars from this dim world below.
Was it a skylark's voice or a soul's triumphant song
We heard in the days gone by in the woods of Dandenong?

Rose, lovely rose—a fairer rose was she—
Rose, white rose, I kiss your tender leaves!
Speak, speak, speak, O Soul-white rose for me,
Say, say to her my heart in silence grieves.
Lonely and sad it grieves amidst the careless throng...
Ah, green are the waving trees in the woods of Dandenong!

Star, crystal star, shining where angels be,
Bright, bright star—yet brighter were her eyes—

Ai! Ai! Ai! Star of my life was she!
Shine, gently shine where low her bright head lies.
And ah, but the world is cold and the way is dark and long;
And oh, that we were once more in the woods of Dandenong.

THE SOLDAN'S DAUGHTER

It is the Soldan's Daughter:
  She standeth silently
Upon her high stone tower
  And looks across the sea.

Her eyes are black as midnight,
  Yet in their depths doth dwell
A light like starlight shining
  Within a holy well.

Her lips are like pomegranates
  That in the summer glow
Outside the latticed windows
  Of the seraglio.

Her breasts are golden goblets,
  So pure, and chaste, and fine;
Two cups like moons of splendor,
  And full of royal wine.

Her brow is like a banner
That leads a royal line;
Her hair is like the darkness
In branches of the pine.

Her slender limbs are lilies,
Slow-swaying in the stream;
Her feet in scarlet slippers
Like pearls in rose-leaves gleam.

Kings from afar have sought her,
Rajahs, and Grand Viziers,
Khans of the Golden Horde, and
Lords of ten thousand spears.

Kings from afar have sought her,
With crowns and veils of pride—
But ever the Soldan's Daughter
She turned her head aside.

They came with turbans jewelled,
Black beards, and eyes of jet;
And each wore on his bosom
A red love-amulet.

They sacked her royal city;
Her sire, the Soldan, slew—
These proud, imperious lovers
Who came with swords to woo.

They wooed her with red slaughter
And banners battle-torn,
But ever the Soldan's Daughter
She turned aside in scorn.

She dwells in her high tower
Beside the wan, waste sea;
She weaves a spell of magic
Subtly and silently.

She makes an incantation,
With flame and strange perfume,
And solemn, star-eyed flowers
That in the midnight bloom.

She calls across the ages,
Across the wan, waste sea;
She calls from her high tower,
She calls and calls to me.

I hear that voice of magic
Over Oblivion's flood,
Over the seas of Silence,
Over the years of blood.

I stand beside the seashore,
And in the midnight dumb;
O, golden Soldan's Daughter.
Full soon, full soon, I come.

THE QUEST OF BRAHMA

Once upon a hushed red morning
In the wondrous years of old,
When the sun rose like a Rajah
Clad in robes of gleaming gold,

And upon his land of India
Poured the largess of his heart,
By the Ganges stood a Brahmin,
Far from all his kind, apart.

Darkly on that royal dawning
Gazed the Brahmin, sore distraught,
And his body lean was shaken
With the passion of his thought.

"Many years with hands uplifted
Till they withered in the air,
I have prayed," he cried, "to Brahma,
But He heedeth not my prayer.

"I have prayed and I have fasted,
Waiting ever for a sign,
While the world went reeling past me,
With its women and its wine.

"Burning suns by day have scorched me,
Freezing stars with icy spears,
They have pierced my brain at midnight,
Through the long and lonely years.

"I would lose my soul in Brahma,
Who is soul, and life, and breath;
Nought to me are human shadows
Flitting by to empty death.

"I have done with prayer and fasting:
Lest the years in vain go by,
I will search the world for Brahma,
I will seek him till I die."

Thus the Brahmin spake, then swiftly
Journeyed up the Ganges stream:
All around him reeled the riot
Of a strange phantasmal dream.

Rajahs proud he saw returning
From the wars in regal guise,
In their turbans blood-red rubies
Gleaming over gleaming eyes;

Royal elephants that slowly
Marched, with trunks in pride uncurled;
And the spearmen and the banners,
And the glory of the world:

And, amidst the great processions,
Captive kings in fetters borne;
While the cymbals clashed with triumph,
And the trumpets blared with scorn.

These he passed with eyes unheeding
All their glorious array;
For he knew they were but shadows
That grim death would sweep away.

Never sight of human sorrow,
Never show of human pride,
Edge of sword or smile of woman,
Turned him from his path aside.

Yet he stayed by still, dim waters,
On whose breast the lotus blooms—
Flower of secrecy and silence,
Gleaming, midst the temple glooms.

All in vain he searched the temples
Where, in many a form and guise,
In the dim vast halls the idols
Stared with soulless, jewelled eyes.

"I will seek," he cried "for Brahma
Midst the everlasting snows;
Where the holy Ganges River
From his awful forehead flows."

To the far-off peaks he turned him,
Leaving homes of men behind;
Driven onward by his yearning
As a flame before the wind.

Hunger gnawed, and fear pursued him,
As he climbed with sobbing breath;
And above his head, unsleeping,
Hovered dark the vulture Death.

Ever downward plunged the torrents
In a fierce and foaming flood,
Roaring through the gloomy gorges,
Like a people mad for blood.

Rose the white moon like a spectre—
All with ghostly light aglow,
Shining on a lonely Shadow
Midst the Himalayan snow.

Rose the sun in opal glory—
Still the Shadow lingered there,
On a ledge above the eagles
In the vast blue void of air.

Long the Brahmin stood and gazed on
India lying far below,
Like a Maharanee dreaming
Evil dreams of war and woe.

And he felt his bosom thrilling
With a fearful pity then,
For the fierce unhappy nations,
For the wretched sons of men.

"All this woe of old passed by me
As a cry upon the wind:
Brahma is no God of Mercy
Unto hapless humankind.

"Or, perchance, the Fate that rules us
Rules Him too, through endless years,
And the Ganges flowing seaward
Is the flowing of his tears."

So he spake: then upward struggling
Came at last unto a plain,
Cold and silent, white and awful,
Far above the hurricane.

And amidst it gleamed the fountain
Whence the Holy River flows,
And beside the mystic fountain,
Bloomed a red and lonely Rose.

Never wind its leaves did ruffle,
Never breeze dispersed its balm,
As it bloomed there—a still-glowing
Blossom of Eternal Calm.

All the plain was white and silent,
Blue and silent was the sky;
And the Brahmin, in his anguish,
By the Rose lay down to die.

"Now the end has come," he murmured,
"Lone I die amidst the snows,
I have sought in vain for Brahma."
"I am Brahma," breathed the Rose.

DESIRE

Soul of the leaping flame,
Heart of the scarlet fire,
Spirit that hath for name
Only the name—Desire!

Subtle art thou and strong;
Glowing in sunlit skies;
Sparkling in wine and song;
Shining in woman's eyes;

Gleaming on shores of Sleep—
Moon of the wild dream-clan—
Burning within the deep
Passionate heart of Man.

Spirit we can but name,
Essence of Forms that seem,
Odour of violet flame,
Weaver of Thought and Dream,

Laugh of the World's great Heart,
Who shall thy rune recite?
Child of the gods thou art,
Offspring of Day and Night.

Lord of the Rainbow Realm,
Many a shape hast thou—
Glory with laurelled helm;
Love with the myrtled brow;

Sanctity, robed in white;
Liberty, proud and calm,
Ringed with auroral light,
Bearing the sword and palm.

Maidens with dreamful eyes,
Eyes of a dreaming dove,
See thee in noble guise
Coming and call thee—Love!

Youth with his blood aflame,
Running in crystal-red,
Sees, on the Mount of Fame,
Thee with thy hand outspread.

Leader of Hope Forlorn,
When he beholds thine eyes
Shining in splendid scorn—
Storming the rampart, dies.

Many have by good hap
  Seen thee in arms arrayed,
Wearing a Phrygian cap,
  High on a barricade;

Aye, and by dome and arch
  Leading, with eyes ablaze,
Onward the Patriots' March,
  Singing the Marseillaise.

Lo, where with trembling lyre
  Held in his long white hands,
Thrilled by the glance of fire,
  Rapt the Musician stands;

Feeling thee all around
  Glow in the quiv'ring air—
Luminous Soul of Sound!
  Music of all things fair!

Anchorite, pale and worn,
  Sees thee, and earth disowns—
Lifted on prayer, and borne
  Up to the Shining Thrones.

Yea, as the seraph-star
  Chanting in ecstasy,
Singing in fire afar,
  So he beholdeth thee

And, as in darksome mines,
  Far down a corridor,
Starlike a small lamp shines,
  Raying along the floor—

So, ere his race is run,
  Parted his last faint breath,
Thou, for the dying one,
  Lightest the ways of Death;

And, while his kindred mourn
  Over his shell of clay,
Shinest beyond the bourne,
  Dawn of his first new day.

Thus through the lives to be
  We shall fare, each alone,
Evermore lured by thee
  Unto an End unknown.

SHEELAH

When Sheelah in the morning
Comes down the way,
It needs no more adorning
To make it gay;
The stones upon the street,
Sure they kiss her feet.

She dresses all in green,
And that's no sin;
And she wears like any Queen
What she stands in.
If she had not a shawl—
Sure Sheelah's under all.

She looks at me so shyly
With dark-grey eyes;
She looks at me so slyly
In sweet surprise;

And, when she passes on,
My heart she treads upon.

The world is full of girls,
  Men say to me;
The sea is full of pearls,
  My pearl is she;
Though other pearls there be,
She is the pearl for me.

When Sheelah, some fine morning,
  Walks down the way,
She'll vanish without warning,
  And what will I say?
I'll say: "O Saints, be true!
Sheelah, is it you?"

O Sheelah, Sheelah,
  Sheelah, Gramachree!
In all the world of girls
  She's the one girl for me.

THE ROAD OF ROSES

The Sun of Childhood tender
  Illumes the long white way
With touches of rosy splendor,
  All in the dawn of day.

And ever as he passes,
  And through the forest runs,
He lights on leaves and grasses
  A thousand little suns.

And, like a gleaming river
  That to the sea descends,
The long white road runs ever
  To where the Rainbow ends.

The bee his small wings closes,
  And makes his sweet abode
Within the hearts of roses
  That bloom beside the road.

And Spring's wise little lady,
The Primrose, opes her eyne,
And keeps in places shady
Her golden lamps ashine.

The birds, with sunlight sheening
Their throats, sing all a-row,
A song whose mystic meaning
Only the children know.

It tells of strange lands under
The Sunset, strange and fair,
And of the World of Wonder
Above the Rainbow Stair.

It tells of how To-morrow
Will bring a shining sheaf
Of joys without a sorrow,
Of hours without a grief.

So, with clear voices ringing,
And posies in their hands,
The children journey singing
Unto the Wonder Lands.

AVATAR

Mine is the beauty of all bygone years;
I hold within triumphant arms to-day
The loveliness of ages passed away,
Brynhild's, Ysolt's, Gudrun's, and Guinevere's
And hers for whom avenging Argive spears
Smote Trojan heroes in that ancient fray.
And fierce Achilles did great Hector slay,
While sad Andromache wept widow's tears.

Nature is not so rich that she can waste
The wonders of her working wantonly;
Blanaid the Fair, and Rosalie the Chaste,
And burning Sappho, Queen of Melody,
Are born again, and all their charms embraced
In one fair woman who was born for me!

IMPRESSION

The Sea is a Sultana
  Imperious and fair;
A Queen of the Zenana
  With heaving bosom bare.

The Sun, her Lord and Lover,
  From his imperial height,
His golden throne above her,
  Sends kisses of keen light.

What high dream is she dreaming,
  The fair Sultana sea?
So bright she is in seeming;
  Can she know tragedy?

She is the Queen of Magic,
  Of changing smiles and sighs:
Yet in her heart-deeps tragic
  The lost Atlantis lies.

PAUDHEEN'S FAIRY

Paudheen took leave of
His comrades gay,
Upon the eve of
The first of May;
With heart undaunted
He trod the path
Unto the haunted
Green Fairy Rath.

Sore wept his mother
"Avic! Machree!
Where was another
Son dear as he?
He's gone for ever—
Too well I know
The fairies never
Will let him go."

The wind went soughin'
Across the land;
A branch of rowan
Was in her hand;
Witch-hazels bended
Their shadows lean,
Her cry ascended –
"Paudheen! Paudheen!"

It was the night, and
The charmèd hour,
When elf and sprite and
Queen Maeve have power.
Was it, perchance, heard,
That cry so keen?
The lone hill answered,
"Paudheen! Paudheen!"

But Paudheen, lying
On Magic ground,
Of that sore crying
Heard not a sound—
For, through the springing
Green grass, rose clear
A sound of singing
Most sweet to hear.

No wild, marsh-firish,
  Witch-chant he heard,
But kindly Irish
  Was every word.
The strain rose reeling—
  He heard, the rogue,
The song, heart-stealing,
  Of *Tir-nan-oge*.

. . . .

The corn was springing
  Where once was loam—
When, softly singing,
  Paudheen came home.
His step was airy,
  His lips apart—
The Singing Fairy
  Was in his heart.

SPRING SONG

I AM the Vision and the Dream
Of trembling Age, and yearning Youth;
I am the Sorceress Supreme.
I am Illusion; I am Truth.

I am the Queen to whom belongs
The royal right great gifts to give;
I am the Singer of the Songs
That lure men on to live and live.

There is no music like to mine;
I sing in green, and gold and red;
I pour from secret casks the wine
That cheers the cold hearts of the dead.

My harp it has a thousand tones,
And makes the world with joy a-flood;
The old men feel it in their bones,
And life leaps laughing in their blood.

The sourest mortal all in vain
Shall try from me to keep apart;
I have no commerce with his brain—
I storm the fortress of his heart.

I am the Soul of things to come;
I make a lover from a log;
I make a poet of the dumb;
I make a seraph of a frog.

The lover with a wrecked romance,
The gambler by misfortune struck,
I bring to them another chance—
New life, new times, new love, new luck.

My names are all the names impearled
In all the songs my singers sing;
I am the sweetheart of the world—
I am Carissima—the Spring!

THE LAND OF LAISSEZ FAIRE

Far beyond the city's bounds,
And its tidal swells and sounds—
Voices of the Street and Mart,
Throbbings of its mighty heart—
Far from sordid noise and glare
Lies the Land of Laissez Faire.

There the days in joy are born,
Fairest eve brings fairest morn;
And, like the shadows o'er the grass,
Silently the sweet hours pass:
Rose-and-poppy wreaths they wear
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

Through the deep blue summer sky
Snow-white clouds go sailing by,

Like to Ships of Dreams in quest
Of the Country of the Blest—
Ah! it lies below them there,
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

Years ago, in that bright land,
Lovers twain walked hand in hand
Under that blue summer sky—
Surely they were you and I?
Surely We were that fond pair
In the Land of Laissez Faire?

Yea! . . . Your eyes were blue, I wis,
As the sea at dawning is
In the zones of Pearl and Palm,
And you sang a pagan psalm
To a sweet old pagan air,
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

And your brow was smooth and white
As a lily's leaves of light;
And your mouth was red—ah me!
As a red anemone,
And a vine-wreath bound your hair,
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

All around our fair domain—
Like a grim, grey mountain-chain

That doth some green vale in-wall—
Ran a rampart magical,
Shutting out the World's Despair
From the Land of Laissez Faire.

From that sad world, all around,
Never tidings came, nor sound
Of the anguish and the strife
On the battle-field of Life:
For the winds were debonair
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

Builded by a dreaming Celt
Was the House wherein we dwelt:
East and West and South and North
On a pageant it looked forth—
Ah, we had a mansion rare
In the Land of Laissez Faire!

What could make our hearts forlorn
In the crimson-bannered morn?
What could come our hearts to grieve
In the purple-pennoned eve?
What at night our souls could scare
In the Land of Laissez Faire?

Ah, there came a night at last
When an army, marching fast,

With its battle-flags all torn,
By our ramparts swept in scorn—
While the lightnings stabbed the air,
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

And the leader of the Horde
Smote our gate with ringing sword,
Crying with a scornful cry—
"Here they live—who dare not die."
And I cowered in my chair
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

Then against the black of night
Rose a form, with visage white,
Clad in steel, and crowned with flame,
"Duty" was her awful name—
What the Devil brought her there,
In the Land of Laissez Faire?

Swiftly then against the Fates
Firm and sure we barred our gates,
Lit the lamp in bow'r and hall,
And with music bacchanal
Drowned the brazen trumpet's blare—
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

Night went by, and in the morn
Twin white roses without thorn

Breasts as white I placed between,
Saying—"If he saw this scene
God Himself would surely spare
Our sweet Land of Laissez Faire."

In the sunlight—o'er the wall—
Crashing came a horseman tall,
Riding on a steed of black,
Trampling all our world to wrack.
And he said his name was "Care"—
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

. . . . . .

Sweetheart! All too well we know
That was years and years ago,
And amidst the world of men
We have fought our fight since then.
And you often ask me, "Where
Is the Land of Laissez Faire?"

Listen low! Beyond the tall
Ruin of the western wall,
There remains a little spot
Covered with Forget-me-not,
And a little house is there—
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

Dearest, neither you nor I
Now can turn the earth and sky
Into gardens; into seas;
Into frames for fantasies—
Yet shall we find room to spare
In the Land of Laissez Faire.

PLAYERS

And after all—and after all
Our passionate prayers, and sighs and tears,
Is Life a reckless carnival?
And are they lost, our golden years?

Ah, no; ah, no; for, long ago,
Ere Time could sear, or care could fret,
There was a youth called Romeo,
There was a maid named Juliet.

The Players of the past are gone;
The Races rise; the Races pass;
And softly over all is drawn
The quiet Curtain of the Grass.

But when the World went wild with Spring,
What days we had! Do you forget?
When I of all the world was King,
And you were my Queen Juliet?

The things that are; the things that seem—
Who shall distinguish Shape from Show?
The great processional, splendid dream
Of life is all I wish to know.

The Gods their faces turn away
From nations and their little wars;
But we our Golden Drama play,
Before the Footlights of the Stars.

There lives—though Time should cease to flow,
And stars their courses should forget—
There lives a grey-haired Romeo,
Who loves a golden Juliet.

BLANCHELYS

With little hands all filled with bloom,
The rose-tree wakes from her long trance;
And from my heart, as from a tomb,
Steals forth the ghost of dead Romance.

I know not whether wave or clay,
Or living lips your sweet lips kiss;
But you are mine alone to-day,
As in the old days, Blanchelys!

Yea, you are mine to clasp and hold,
In your young loveliness aglow,
As in the time of rose-and-gold
That faded, long and long ago.

Upon the moonlit balcony
We stand once more in silvered shade;
The perfume of the red rose-tree
Floats upward like a serenade:

A faëry music, faint and fine,
A scented song, a tender tune;
It is the melody divine
That lovers hear beneath the moon.

The air is full of incense spilled
From censers of the seraphim,
The Chalice of the Night is filled
With Wine of Magie to the brim.

Your heart is trembling, like a dove
New-caught within your breast—as though,
With struggling pinions, rosy Love
Were prisoned in a drift of snow.

Beyond us lies the purple sea;
Your red geranium-mouth I kiss . . .
Alas, alas, that ever we
Beheld the morning, Blanchelys!

That night of nights I held—and thrilled
With rapture that was close to pain—
The Cup of Love that once is filled,
And nevermore is filled again.

Whoso the Wine of Passion sips,
At him the gods have ever laughed:
The Cup of Love was at my lips—
Would I had drained it at a draught!

There is a Death more sad than Death
That comes to every mortal born,
And takes away the panting breath—
The Death that leaves the heart forlorn.

The banner of my hope is furled;
For fame or name I care no more;
The world is still a goodly world,
But not the world I knew of yore.

Then Beauty trembled in the air,
And burned and sparkled in the sea,
And common things seemed rich and rare,
And Love turned Life to Ecstasy.

The Fates have neither ruth nor grace
For weak or strong, for low or high;
The dust of dead worlds blows through space—
And dust, and less than dust, am I.

The dead men sleeping on the hill
That overlooks the ocean grey,
They lived their lives, and now are still:
Would I could sleep as sound as they.

I walked with fair Philosophy,
Whose eyes are like two holy wells,
In gardens where the Attic bee
Makes honey from the asphodels.

Her speech was slow and silver-clear,
A river flowing full and deep,
She said that Love, divine and dear,
Was but a dream of fevered sleep.

But Memory, with tender sighs,
Breathed softly in the myrtle blooms;
And Passion with her glowing eyes
Stared at me from the pine-tree glooms.

All ballads of true lovers sung,
All stories of true lovers told,
Bring back the days when I was young—
The vanished days of rose-and-gold.

And, in the falling of the year,
Dead leaves beneath the poplar tree
Like old love-letters, worn and sere,
Their mournful stories tell to me.

I sat me down on many a night
When gilded lamps like moons did shine,
And cheeks were flushed and eyes were bright,
To drown my thoughts in crimson wine.

In vain: there never grew the grape,
On Greek or Lusitanian shore,
Whose juice can help us to escape
The thought of days that are no more.

In visions of the night I take
  Your heart to my heart, lover-wise;
And, in the morning, I awake
  With empty hands and burning eyes.

Life yet within me pulses strong,
  And in my veins the blood runs red,
But O, dear God! the days are long,
  And all the world to me is dead.

I had a dream of wringing hands,
  And tear-wet eyes, and faces wan,
And heard a cry from all the lands—
  "O where have our Beloved gone?"

Of all that once to me you were
  In years of yore, I hold but this—
A silken tress of tawny hair:
  Come back, come back, O Blanchelys!

OVER THE WINE

Very often, when I'm drinking,
Of the old days I am thinking,
Of the good old days when living was a Joy,
And each morning brought new Pleasure,
And each night brought Dreams of Treasure,
And I thank the Lord that I was once a Boy.

When I hear the old hands spinning
Yarns of gold there was for winning
In the Roaring Days, that now so silent are,
And my brain is whirling, reeling
With their legends, comes the feeling
That the Rainbow Gold I knew was finer far;

For not all the trains in motion,
All the ships that sail the ocean,

With their cargoes; all the money in the mart—
Could purchase for an hour
Such a treasure as the Flower,
As the Flower of Hope that blossomed in my heart.

Now I sit, and smile, and listen
To my friends whose eyes still glisten,
Though their beards are showing threads of silver-grey,
As they talk of Fame and Glory—
The old, old pathetic story—
While they drink "Good luck" to luck that keeps away.

When I hear a politician
Speak of honors and position,
And the time to come when he will sit on high,
Then I feel a sovran pity
For this species of banditti,
Raising trouble while the golden time goes by.

Long ago I did discover
It was fine to be a lover,
But the heartache and the worry spoil the game;
Now I think, like an old vandal,
That the game's not worth the candle—
And I know some other vandals think the same.

And I hate the cant of striving,
Slaving, planning, and contriving,

Struggling onward for a paltry little prize.
O, it fills my heart with sorrow
This mad grasping for To-morrow,
While To-day from gold to purple dusks and dies.

Very often, when I'm drinking,
Of the old days I am thinking,
Of the good old days when living was a Joy.
When I see folk marching dreary
To the tune of *Miserere*—
Then I thank the Lord that I am still a Boy.

BACCHANALIAN

I PITY him who has not swung
  The Thyrsus in the air,
And followed Bacchus, blithe and young,
  With vine-leaves in his hair;
And heard the Maenads sing,
And the mad cymbals ring.

I pity those who have to walk
  In sober ways and sad,
And keep a guard upon their talk
  Lest men should think them mad.
Or careless speech should show
The felon thought below.

When in my goblet, blithe and gay,
  The bearded bubbles wink,

For all poor souls like this I pray
  That they may learn to drink,
And like a rose in rain
Open shut heart and brain.

Who does not drink he does not know,
  And he will never find,
What merry fellows live below
  The surface of his mind:
These other men to me
Are right good company.

If beings of Mythology
  Could live at my commands
Briareus I'd choose to be,
  Who had a hundred hands:
And every hand of mine
Would hold a pint of wine.

And of those beakers ninety-nine
  With white wine and with red
Should brim for dear old friends of mine,
  The living and the dead.
By Pluto there would be
A noble revelry!

Then let us unto Bacchus sing
  Evoe! up and down—
For Bacchus is the wisest king
  Who ever wore a crown:
His vine leaves hide from view
More wit than Plato knew.

THE OLD BOHEMIAN

The world was in my debt,
I was the Friend of Man,
When, years ago, I met
The Old Bohemian.

His hat was shocking bad,
He wore a faded tie,
And yet, withal, he had
A moist and shining eye.

And though his purse was lean,
And though his coat was dyed,
He had a lordly mien
And air of ancient pride.

We sat in a hotel,
And drank the amber ale;
And as I touched the bell
I listened to his tale.

He told me that some day
In his place I would be;
But all the world was gay—
No use in warning me.

He spoke of high Desire
And aspirations true;
And flamed again the fire
In eyes of faded blue.

"By God!" the old man said,
"The days of old were grand;
I painted cities red,
I owned the blessed land.

"I loved, when I was young,
The girls in all the bars;
And, coming home, I hung
My hat upon the stars.

"And O, the times were glad!
Such times you never knew;
And O, the nights we had!
And O, the jolly crew!

"Where are the songs—the talk—
The friends that used to be;
I with my shadow walk
At last for company.

And though we missed the bays,
That Poets we would be;
And though we missed the bays
We *lived* our Poetry!

"We talked and talked and talked,
And slowly, one by one,
My old companions walked
Into the setting sun."

The old Bohemian said,
"The world owes nought to me.
I lie upon the bed
Which I made—carefully.

There is one way to play
The mad Bohemian game,
I found and took the way—
And you will do the same."

Ah, that was years ago,
When skies were bright and blue,
And now, alas, I know
His prophecy was true.

Yet fill the glass once more,
Bohemians, and sing—
Upon another shore
There waits another Spring!

THE POET AND THE MUSE

The Poet.

The Darling of the Year with sifted gold
  Of sunshine makes the old earth young again;
  Spring's dancing music lilts in pulse and vein,
And all the world is merry as of old:
  But shadows only dwell within my brain;
My heart is like a hearth with ashes cold.

O Muse, if I have loved thee late and long,
  If I have worshipped thee, and made a shrine
  To hold thine image in this heart of mine,
And served thee with the service of my song,
  And poured my years out at thy feet divine—
Where art thou now when ghosts around me throng?

Where is the pride, above the pride of kings,
  That once I felt when in the glowing air
  I saw the shining wonder of thy hair,

And heard the rustle of thy radiant wings
  Alas, and have I come by ways so fair
To dust and ashes and the end of things?

My soul is compassed round by phantoms vast,
  Whose black wings shut from me the sweet blue sky
  And blue broad sea I knew when thou wert nigh.
O Muse, return to me! . . . She comes at last!
  And I can now, clear-voiced, like Agag, cry—
Surely the bitterness of Death is past!

THE MUSE.

Thou wert my servant in the time gone by,
  And through the world I led thee by the hand
  And showed thee all the beauty of the land,
And all the marvels of the Earth and Sky.
  Thy nights and days I held at my command,
And unto thee I gave the Seeing Eye.

The sacred secret of the infinite,
  That burns beneath the beauty of the rose,
  And in the hearts of youth and maiden glows,
And fills and thrills the world with life and light,
  And is the soul of all that breathes and grows—
  I made it visible unto thy sight.

But now another Muse holds thee in thrall.
Thou canst not serve us twain: that is the law.

THE POET.

"O Goddess, ere thou dost from me withdraw,
Show me what other Muse I serve withal!"

THE MUSE.

"Behold!"

The Poet turned and saw
The shadow of a Wine-Jar on the wall.

ADIEU, BOHEMIA !

The Wine and Ale are done,
The frenzy and the fun,
  The glorious Hurrah;
The World says, "Take your task,"
Quite empty is the cask.
  Adieu, Bohemia!

The World is grey and grim;
The lights are burning dim;
  The cheers are faint and few—
And ghosts glide up the stairs
To fill the empty chairs.
  Bohemia, adieu!

We owned some fine chateaux
Whereon, at even-glow,

Red banners rose and fell
Upon the winds of Spain—
Would I were there again!—
Bohemia, farewell!

Then, ev'ry golden morn
We heard a sudden horn
Taran-taran-tara!
It called to Fields of Fame
Where each would make a name—
Adieu, Bohemia!

What Pit has sucked them down,
Our dreams of fair renown,
And our ambitions high?
They are as dead and gone
As ancient Babylon—
Bohemia, good-bye!

The man who was our Wit
Is mentally unfit
His business to pursue;
Our chief Philosopher
With the Philistines is square—
Bohemia, adieu!

Our Orator sublime,
Who could to Heaven climb,
And stars pluck from the sky
His speeches to adorn,
Is—auctioneering corn!
Bohemia, good-bye!

Our Poet who could be
A Voice of Ecstacy
Has lost his gift of song;
His heavy-harnessed Muse
Is working for the Jews:
Bohemia, so-long!

A pleasant land I wis
Where no To-morrow is,
And towers touch the sky,
Is our Bohemia land,
Though coins come slow to hand—
Bohemia, good-bye!

Closed is the tavern-door;
The kingdom is no more—
The kingdom that I knew
When I was mad for Art,
And birds sang in my heart—
Bohemia, adieu!

O purple-chaliced nights,
With all your dear delights,
  Take back your visions—Va!
The stars burn overhead,
Like candles round the dead,
  Adieu, Bohemia!

THE REQUITER

When all illusions fair are gone,
What keeps us still alive?
What mocking devil lures us on
To suffer and to strive?

Why should it fill us with despair
To watch the fading light?
Was ever any day so fair
That we should dread the night?

Sorrow and joy came in the past—
Joy was a fickle bride,
But Sorrow, faithful to the last,
Stays ever at my side.

The brightest of my days are spent,
And yet I wait to see
The Master of the Dark Event
Turn dusk to dawn for me.

And still with foolish, eager eyes—
A true and bitter jest—
I watch to see the sun arise
Resplendent—in the west.

She lures us onward in the race,
Though we have knife and rope,
A devil with an angel's face—
The devil men call Hope.

TITANIA

I THOUGHT that Life was done with me,
And had no sweet surprise in store,
Nor any fine adventure more,
Nor any tale of chivalry—
When in a crowded city lane
I met Titania again.

Her small face, delicate and pure,
Was like a small Greek lamp, whose light
Serenely and divinely bright,
Shines through a Gothic wood obscure,
As in that crowded city lane
I met Titania again.

Ten years had passed—my songs were sung;
My little vogue had had its day;
My hair was growing scant and grey--
Then in a moment I was young,
When in the crowded city lane
I met Titania again.

THE TRYST

There is a region vague and dim,
  Where ghostly shadows dwell—
Vast formless Things and Phantoms grim—
  The March of Heaven and Hell.

On one grey rim up-gushes, far
  And fierce, a fiery flood,
Too deadly red to be a star—
  It seems a Rose of Blood.

And on the other border gleams,
  Right glorious to behold,
A splendour in the dusk that seems
  To be a Rose of Gold.

But this dim Realm of Mysteries
  Must lie aloof, alone,
Between the Two Eternities
  Nor God nor Devil own.

The Seraph swift may dare the glooms
  Of thousand worlds destroyed,
But never dares to spread his plumes
  Within this awful Void.

The Demon who from star to star
  Like lightning leaps, may tell
Of travels wide, but leaves afar
  The March of Heaven and Hell.

There uncreated lawless Things,
  From blind, black Chaos bred,
Move round and round with moveless wings—
  Half-living and half-dead.

Yet here they met. Her rosy plumes
  Drooped wearily, her hair
Celestial bright was damp with fumes
  Of that malefic air.

He hid her 'neath his night-black wings,
  All lined with scarlet flame,
And glared defiance at the Things—
  The Things without a name.

Then she began to lose her fear,
  And whispered low—"Behold,
Beyond this place of darkness drear,
  Yon shining Rose of Gold!

"That is God's City, and my Home,
Would it were also thine!
As lamps beneath its crystal dome,
A million suns do shine.

"Its walls are gold without, within
It has a sea of glass,
And you can see the worlds therein
Like shoals of fishes pass.

"And once I caught, for simple mirth,
So quaint it looked and queer,
A little star-speck called the Earth
And hung it in my ear.

"Then I grew tired, and this was how
I threw it far away;
'Tis in a sick old system now,
The Star-Archangels say.

"Those proud Archangels, every one,
I've seen them o'er and o'er,
Each hold his head as if a sun
Upon his neck he bore.

"In scarlet robes, with boughs of palm,
The haughty martyrs go,
All chanting their Eternal psalm—
The only one they know.

"The Virgins, in their robes of white,
Walk singing loud and clear,
With sweet Cecilia playing light,
And Dorothea near.

"We sing to one sweet simple air
Which never changed may be;
Then leave the City of Despair,
O Love, and come with me!"

The tender Demon heard her tale,
His smile was fond, but bleak.
He said, "Your revels, cold and pale,
Would kill me in a week."

Then, pointing to the verge of space,
Where gushed the lurid foam,
He said, "That is my Dwelling Place,
My own Beloved Home.

"We have no shining seas of glass
To please the Cherubim,
Wherethrough the swift white systems pass,
And stars like fishes swim.

"We do not care, in gilt bazaars,
At childish games to play,
For we can bathe in burning stars,
When comes their Judgment Day.

"O you should see our shrieking street
All red with bloody foam,
When Alexander Caesar meets
In triumph riding home.

"And, when across the burning plain
Great Scipio's name resounds,
Then Hannibal and Tamerlane
Let loose their battle-hounds.

"But Hell for me grows far too hot
When great Napoleon—
I like him best of all the lot—
Meets one named Wellington.

"For all the captains of great wars,
In war-paint of renown—
Blood-red like Roman conquerors—
To us have all come down.

"And all those mighty men of war
I've named—you'll smile to hear—
Come from the little spitfire star
That trembled in your ear.

"But other stars had other wars;
We have their captains, too,
And now and then Earth's warriors
These captains beat to glue.

"But you should see the mighty streets,
All arched with flaming stars,
When Helen Cleopatra meets—
Each throned on burning cars.

"There is no day of all the days
In red Eternity,
But brings a change to us. Our ways
Are not as yours, you see.

"Then leave your city with its thin
Pale, foolish joys, and learn
The joys of Fiery Life within
The Land of no Return."

. . . .

Will any reader, grave or gay,
A simple answer make
(I can't myself) to this: Which way
Did those strange lovers take?

THE SLAIN

I FOLLOWED in an awful dream,
With no desire, or hope, or plan,
The winding of a silent stream
That through a shadowy woodland ran.

No voice of leaves above I heard,
No voice of gladness or distress,
There was no song from any bird
To stir that dreadful silentness.

And as that gloomy path I trod,
I found within a place remote
The body of a fair dead God
With marks of fingers on his throat.

Who slew that Being all divine,
And from his eyes the life-light stole?
Ah me, the finger-marks were mine,
And mine the murder of my soul!

MESSAGE

Long is the journey from worm to man, and full of
trouble and pain,
But short and swift is the journey from man to the
worm again.
We walk erect for a random year—make love, make
war, make woe,
And where is the God to hold our hands? Then down
to the dust we go.

What does it matter, when all is said, the lot of our
living here?
Death will deliver us at the end, and what is there
left to fear?
What is there here for man to fear who draws not
coward's breath,
For what can fright the heart of a man whose
dearest friend is Death?

Take ye no heed of the Future—let Hell and Heaven
go;
Be brave, be true, be tender, be just—and God will
know;
There is no possible happiness, there is no possible
bliss,
Nor wisdom known to the sons of men so sure and
true as this.

Live richly while your life-days last, and let your
heart keep young.
God will remember the generous hand before the
praying tongue.
This knowledge comes to the dying man who turns
him to the wall,
That genius counts for less than nothing, and
Goodness counts for all.

WOMAN

I AM the Spring that makes the blood
  Burn red in veins of sons of earth:
I am the Warder of the flood
  That beats against the Gates of Birth.

I am the Star that shines to lift
  The hearts of men to Paradise.
I am the Giver and the Gift
  I am the Struggle and the Prize.

I am the Lure the high Gods sent,
  The Secret Sweet they did contrive
To make the sons of men content
  To keep their hapless race alive.

Yea, I am everlasting Love.
  In ages ere the stars took flame
There brooded on my breast the Dove,
  And from my womb the white worlds came.

My Lover Man, the strong, the gay,
  Will fade and pass like passing breath
But I shall keep my steadfast way—
  For I am Life that laughs at Death.

I am romance with golden hair,
  A banner on the dark unfurled;
I am the Thrall of Fate, and bear
  The burden of the weary world.

ELIZABETH

"I WANT upon a plate of gold
The round green Earth," I said,
"As dark Herodias of old
Had John the Baptist's head.

"And if to get that guerdon great
The lack of gold debars
I'll beat the sun into a plate
And set it round with stars.

"I take the blood of Life and write
Upon the mask of Death,
Across the day, across the night,
Thy name—Elizabeth."

THE WOMAN AT THE WASHTUB

The Woman at the Washtub,
  She works till fall of night;
With soap, and suds and soda
  Her hands are wrinkled white.
Her diamonds are the sparkles
  The copper-fire supplies;
Her opals are the bubbles
  That from the suds arise.

The Woman at the Washtub
  Has lost the charm of youth;
Her hair is rough and homely,
  Her figure is uncouth;
Her temper is like thunder,
  With no one she agrees—
The children of the alley
  They cling around her knees.

The Woman at the Washtub,
  She too had her romance;
There was a time when lightly
  Her feet flew in the dance.
Her feet were silver swallows,
  Her lips were flowers of fire;
Then she was Bright and Early,
  The Blossom of Desire.

O Woman at the Washtub,
  And do you ever dream
Of all your days gone by in
  Your aureole of steam?
From birth till we are dying
  You wash our sordid duds,
O Woman of the Washtub!
  O Sister of the Suds!

One night I saw a vision
  That filled my soul with dread,
I saw a Woman washing
  The grave-clothes of the dead;
The dead were all the living,
  And dry were lakes and meres,
The Woman at the Washtub
  She washed them with her tears.

I saw a line with banners
  Hung forth in proud array—
The banners of all battles
  From Cain to Judgment Day.
And they were stiff with slaughter
  And blood, from hem to hem,
And they were red with glory,
  And she was washing them.

"Who comes forth to the Judgment,
  And who will doubt my plan?"
"I come forth to the Judgment
  And for the Race of Man.
I rocked him in his cradle,
  I washed him for his tomb,
I claim his soul and body,
  And I will share his doom."

ATLAS

Long since, out of high Olympus,
Through gleaming gulfs of air,
Like a wild, white star shot downward
Hermes, the Messenger.

As he flew, the skies around him,
Like a flag of stars, were furled—
Till he came to where strong Atlas
Upheld the heavy World.

The great broad-shouldered giant
Strode darkly on his road,
But ever to Zeus made outcry
To rid him of his load.

Quoth Hermes, laughing lightly;
"Thou soon shalt take thine ease—
The Gods' Fool I have brought thee,
The strong Man Hercules!

"And he shall bear thy burden,
And he thy yoke shall wear;
And that he throw off neither
Henceforth shall be thy care."

Then Hercules the Worker,
With lip of pride upcurled,
Took, smiling, on his shoulders
The burden of the world.

But Atlas sprang upon it,
And, with triumphant air,
Cried, "Fool of the Gods, 'tis written
That *me* too thou shalt bear!"

From Pole to Pole his body
Lay stretched at godlike ease;
His arms clasped the Equator,
His feet were in the seas.

He laughed a laugh Titanic—
"O Hermes, I have won
A sturdy Beast of Burden
To bear me round the sun!

"O Hermes, I shall ride him
With iron bit and rein—
And lest he should prove restive
I will chain him with a chain."

And Hercules the Worker
With groans the burden bore;
But the more he groaned and murmured
Proud Atlas laughed the more.

And, if he shook down Empires
In throes of angry pain,
With bolt and rivet Atlas
Straight fastened them again.

And round the sun for æons,
The world, with all its zones,
Rolled to a dreadful music
Of laughter and of groans.

Then came a small sweet spirit,
To Hercules said she—
"Take heart again, sad giant,
My name is Liberty."

And age by age she labored,
By days and nights she wrought
With rasp and file of Knowledge,
And acid keen of Thought.

"Thy chains are nearly severed,
The day draws nigh," said she,
"When, with one wrench convulsive,
Thou shalt once more be free."

The day came—and the Gods' Fool
With eyes far-shining trod
Upon the earth—his burden
Of old—a demigod.

. . . . .

Ye say this is a Fable—
Too long the Hour doth wait.
Ye fools and blind—this moment
'Tis knocking at the gate.

FREEDOM AND FATE

Freedom stood leaning on her sword,
And sadly sighed;
Her eyes were on the toiling horde
For whom Christ died.

"Was it in vain, that sacrifice
On Calvary?
Did God's Son pay that woeful price
For *this*?" said she.

"Before me lies the sea of blood;
The skies are wan;
Must I pass through this deadly flood?"
Fate answered—"On!"

ISIS

For one great hour have I forgot the quest of
The singer's bitter bread;
For one great hour my soul has been the guest of
The star-eyed, deathless dead.

The light of life that hour was like to twilight,
The dark of death to dawn,
And from mine eyes, made blind by their own eyelight,
The veil of flesh was drawn.

And I, methought, beheld the sight forbidden—
All in the moonlight pale—
The form of Isis, but the face was hidden
Behind the seven-fold veil.

And, one by one, the veils were lifted slowly,
Like mist at the sunrise,
The veils that hid that face august and holy
For ever from man's eyes.

One veil was green of hue as Earth's spring robe is
When all the world seems new;
One, as the sea that rolls around the globe is,
Was grey, and green and blue.

And one was shining like the noontide golden,
And one was sown with stars,
And one was dark as Doom in legends olden
Of dim, forgotten wars.

And one was—though its light was somewhat duller—
Red as a world in flame,
And one was of the strange and mystic colour
For which men have no name.

This last veil rose, the Secret Old revealing,
The Ancient Mystery,
And cynic laughter through my heart went pealing—
There was no face to see.

THE SOUTH WIND

With head that lightens in the clouds,
And feet that flash along the flood,
The South Wind comes and shakes the shrouds
Of ships, and dances in my blood.

He clove his way through unknown skies,
Not soon to come within our ken,
From that white, lonely land that lies
Beyond the world of living men.

His laughter rocks the spires; his hand
Seizes the pine-tree by the hair;
His voice goes roaring through the land,
And drives unto his den Despair.

The singers suave of soft delights,
At these my Great Musician mocks:
He strikes the forest-harp, and smites
The song of storm from hollow rocks.

And I who cursed my natal star,
  And said of late that life was vain,
Am borne upon his wings afar
  And thank the gods for life again.

THE LITTLE HOUSE

THERE'S a little house in Mosman that stands upon the hill,
As it stood in the years long ago;
In the little garden so green, and grave and still,
Seven shadows walk to and fro.

Little knows the good wife who keeps the house to-day
That she lives in a shadow-throng;
She hears her brown-faced children laughing at their play,
And she carols a careless song.

Little does she know that where red geraniums grow
On the brow of the grassy height,
Where the baby sits and plays with his pretty cheeks aglow,
There sat there, of old, Heart's Delight.

O, Heart's Delight was fair, and the blue enamored air
Kissed her lips that like roses shone;
And the heart of summer glowed in her golden-flowing hair
When the summer days were gone.

And there is a little summer-house and round it grows a vine,
And the sunrays around it dance,
And I see two shadows sitting there, and drinking of the wine
And a-talking of old Romance.

Seven shadows walk there in sunlight and moonshine
Seven shadows walk to and fro,
And I would, and I would that the Little House were mine
With the Ghosts of the Long Ago.

EARTH AND SEA

Abou Ben Adam sitting on a day,
Forlorn and silent by Maroubra Bay,
And tasting scornfully the tame sea-spray,

Said: "Would to God, if any God there be,
That there would come some sudden chance on me
To change this life of dull tranquility!

"These multitudinous misspent mountain-waves,
These long, low rollers that re-fill the eaves,
The sun that over them his banner waves—

"My God! how does he wave it! look, from east
To west the glory comes and is increased.
And all the world decks for a wedding feast--

"All these things weary me. The seas that roll
Unceasing from the awful Silent Pole
They bring no message to my yearning soul.

"I watch them from the far horizon roam
Unto the reefs that lie below my home—
Prophets of nothing, with their lips of foam!"

Abou Ben Adam, fishing in the sea,
Brought up a fish that sparkled splendidly;
It was a woman fairer far than he.

Her eyes were blue as in the morning breeze,
Her breasts were whiter than the foaming seas,
Her lips were red as sea-anemones.

Abou Ben Adam, by Maroubra Bay,
Took her to shore, all shining with the spray . . .
They lived there in his cabin many a day.

They lived full many a day and saw the torn
White breakers seethe around their Land of Morn.
And unto them were many children born.

The red geraniums on their window-stand
Smiled always gay defiance from the land
Unto the sea that snarled along the strand.

Splendid nasturtiums did their banners blow,
And red-voiced roses with their lips aglow,
Against this steadfast, silent, scornful snow.

Abou Ben Adam, in a silent poise,
Sat fishing with his five sea-salted boys. . . .
But in the house the woman heard the noise.

She heard the noise of all the gods of old,
Of all the nations dead; of all the gold
Resplendent burials in the ocean old.

Then spake she, fire-eyed, through her gleaming hair,
To One that for Ben Adam waited there—
Not dark as she, but all so darkly fair;

"I stood and caught him in the splendid surge
Of shining days. He did my sea-ships urge,
Scald-song and sea-song, asagard or dirge.

"I, who have heard the masts at Byrsa hum,
Who laughed at Antony, at Actium,
Shall I not say unto my lover—'Come?'

"The sea roared like a lion over-past
With many feasts; upon each shore were cast
Three worlds in white delirium from the Past;

"And I stood splendidly above the foam
Of galleys and the fire of fane and dome,
And scorned the wreck of many-triremed Rome.

"For I was greater than all wrecks of these—
Venus and Dian over lands and seas,
Muse of all Lovers; Muse of Tragedies."

The Other spake no word, but sat content,
And into that green ocean imminent,
Her long, green arms, like slender spirals, went.

. . . . .

Nothing could touch him ; far from all was he,
And that red kiss that touched him tenderly
Was as the kiss of the forgetting sea.

. . . . .

They took and buried him where grasses be,
Far from the kiss of that forgetting sea;
The Dark One said—"He still shall lie with me."

TAMARAMA BEACH

The waves are dancing in the sun,
A jewelled crown has each;
Their raiment is of silver spun—
On Tamarama Beach.

Upon a far-off summer day
We sat on this grey stone;
Now you are half the world away,
And I sit here alone.

What made the pebbles jewels rare?
What turned the sands to gold?
The Prince of Fantasy was there,
In those fine days of old.

The wild flowers bloomed in fashion brave,
The breeze made music sweet,
And Eros, on a crested wave,
Rode laughing to your feet.

Your hair was like a shining veil
Around your shoulders spread;
Your proud young face was rosy-pale,
And, oh, your lips were red.

A wreath of smoke rose from the hill;
A sail shone far at sea;
And, in that scene so calm and still,
There were but you and me.

The sun made on the ocean floor
A pathway broad and bright;
The Future shone our eyes before,
Like that long lane of light.

Methought I saw, as we stood there,
The noon of your renown,
When you, as Queen of Song, would wear
A rose-and-laurel crown.

For you strange flags would be unfurled
In cities old and new,
And you would sing for all the world
The songs I wrote for you.

And while I saw that vision rare,
That would be truth in time,
I wove for you a garland fair
Of many colored rhyme.

What glamor had come over me?
What strange spell magical?
It was the Prince of Fantasy
Who held me in his thrall.

I looked into your eyes of brown,
And I saw clearly there
That you, too, saw the Singer's Crown
Which, some day, you should wear.

My vision was a Prophecy,
And part of it came true.
Your name is known from sea to sea—
And I am dead to you.

Your voice turns Winter into Spring,
They say; so let it be.
I only know the songs you sing,
They were not made by me.

You are a Queen of Song sublime—
So I have often read—
While I am a poor Prince of Rhyme,
Long disinherited.

Enough! who cares for song or rhyme?—
I've had my share of each:
I knew you in your sweetest time
On Tamarama Beach.

THE MUSES OF AUSTRALIA

She plays her harp by hidden rills,
The sweet shy Muse who dwells
In secret hollows of the hills,
And green untrodden dells.

Her voice is as the voice of streams
That under myrtles glide;
Our Kendall saw her face in dreams,
And loved her till he died.

At times, by some green-eyelashed pool,
She lies in slumber deep;
Her slender hands are white and cool
As are the hands of sleep.

And, when the sun of Summer flaunts
His fire the hills along,
She keeps her secret sunless haunts,
And sings a shadowy song.

She weaves a wild, sweet magic rune,
When o'er the tree-tops high
The silver sickle of the moon
Shines in a rose-grey sky.

But in the dawn, the soft red dawn,
When fade the stars above,
She walks upon a shining lawn,
And sings the song of Love.

. . . .

But, lo, the Muse with flashing eyes,
And backward-streaming hair!
She grips her steed with strong brown thighs,
Her panting breasts are bare.

In trances sweet, or tender dreams,
She has not any part—
Her blood runs like the blood that streams
Out of the mountain's heart.

Her lips are red; the pride of life
Her heart of passion thrills;
She is the Muse whose joy is strife,
Whose home is on the hills.

Her voice is as a clarion clear,
And rings o'er the hill and dell;
She sings a song of gallant cheer—
Dead Gordon knew her well.

She checks her steed upon a rise—
The wind uplifts his mane—
And gazes far with flashing eyes
Across the rolling plain.

. . . .

Who comes in solemn majesty
Through haze of throbbing heat?
It is the Desert Muse, and she
Is veiled from head to feet.

Yet men the Mountain Muse will leave,
And leave the Muse of Streams,
To follow her from dawn to eve—
And perish with their dreams.

She passes far beyond their ken,
With slow and solemn pace,
Over the bleaching bones of men
Who died to see her face.

Her secrets were to some revealed
Who loved her passing well—
But death with burning fingers sealed
Their lips ere they could tell.

In silence dread she walks apart—
Yet I have heard men say
The song that slumbers in her heart
Will wake the world some day.

She is the Muse of Tragedy,
And walks on burning sands;
The greatest of the Muses Three
In our Australian lands.

WHEN LONDON CALLS

They leave us—artists, singers, all—
When London calls aloud,
Commanding to her Festival
The gifted crowd.

She sits beside the ship-choked Thames,
Sad, weary, cruel, grand;
Her crown imperial gleams with gems
From many a land.

From overseas, and far away,
Come crowded ships and ships—
Grim-faced she gazes on them; yea,
With scornful lips.

The garden of the earth is wide;
Its rarest blooms she picks
To deck her board, this haggard-eyed
Imperatrix.

Sad, sad is she, and yearns for mirth;
With voice of golden guile
She lures men from the ends of earth
To make her smile.

The student of wild human ways
In wild new lands; the sage
With new great thoughts; the bard whose lays
Bring youth to age;

The painter young whose pictures shine
With colours magical,
The singer with the voice divine—
She lures them all.

But all their new is old to her
Who bore the Anakim;
She gives them gold or Charon's fare
As suits her whim.

Crowned Ogress—old, and sad, and wise—
She sits with painted face
And hard, imperious, cruel eyes
In her high place.

To him who for her pleasure lives,
And makes her wish his goal,
A rich Tarpeian gift she gives—
That slays his soul.

The story-teller from the Isles
  Upon the Empire's rim,
With smiles she welcomes—and her smiles
  Are death to him.

For Her, whose pleasure is her law,
  In vain the shy heart bleeds—
The Genius with the Iron Jaw
  Alone succeeds.

And when the Poet's lays grow bland,
  And urbanised, and prim—
She stretches forth a jewelled hand
  And strangles him.

. . . . .

She sits beside the ship-choked Thames
  With Sphinx-like lips apart—
Mistress of many diadems—
  Death in her heart!

AFTER SUNSET

Dusk-dark against grave red,
  The little hills of the harbour stand:
A black pine lifts its head,
  Like an old chief grim and grand,
  The last to yield in a conquered land.

And darkly against the sky,
  Stand rows of tall green trees,
Like warriors doomed to die,
  Who ask no elegies.
But lean on their spears, and wait
The swift, sure steps of Fate.

Behold, where a soft light shows
  Over a hill-top near,
  Delicate, pure and clear
As the ghost of a golden rose—

A gum-tree gently sways,
Sways in the breeze and swings;
And to itself it sings—
"This is not the last of days—
This is not the End of Things!"

For the gum-tree brave was born
Beneath Australian skies,
In Australia's earliest morn,
And knows that its own bright Sun,
When the long dark hours are done,
Will again in the East arise.

And now
Each dark hill's breast and brow
Are flashing with jewels bright
That seem—so shining there—
Like diamonds in dark hair,
Or eyes that in the night
Gleam in a lion's den—
But each is a kindly light
From street-lamps shining fair,
And the kindly homes of men.

And from many a wharf and quay,
And many an anchored barque,

The long reflections shine,
Quivering tremulously,
  On the waters velvet-dark—
And those shining spirals seem to be
Tall golden columns Byzantine
Of palaces under the sea.

But, seen in another mood,
  They seem unto mine eyes
The swords of the seraphs who stood
  By the Gate of Paradise.

The ferries flash to and fro—
  Marvellous mortal-carrying sprites,
  Genii of the Arabian Nights—
For they are alive, and aglow
  From stem to stern, and they make—
  Each with its shining wake,
And its light and its life in the night—
A music of sound and sight,
A melody of delight.

The moon's cold virgin face
Looks down with a brighter grace,
  As once she gazed upon
  The young Endymion;

For though, from her car impearled,
She sees strange sights and rare,
  And Beauty and Mystery—
  She sees no sight more fair,
More fair in all the world,
  Than Sydney by the Sea.

MAVOURNEEN

On a morning bright of cheer,
Do you hear,
Do you hear, bird of dawning, do you hear?
I was walking by the river
Where the tall reeds shine and shiver,
When I met my colleen dear,
Singing clear
As a lark in the Spring of the year.

She was dressed in Irish green
Like a queen
Of the woods, she was dressed in Irish green;
And she smiled, and I grew bolder,
Touched the harp upon her shoulder,
And I said to her: "I ween,
By your mien
And your eyes, you are dark Rosaleen."

O, she kissed me with a grand
Air and bland,
By the rowan-shadowed, haunted river-strand,
And to music did quiver
All the reeds upon the river
As she took me by the hand,
By the hand,
And said: "I am your own Ireland."

ANNA

The pale discrowned stacks of maize,
Like spectres in the sun,
Stand shivering nigh Avonaise,
Where all is dead and done.

The sere leaves make a music vain,
With melancholy chords;
Like cries from some old battle-plain,
Like clash of phantom swords.

But when the maize was lush and green
With musical green waves,
She went, its plumed ranks between,
Unto the hill of graves.

There you may see sweet flowers set
O'er damsels and o'er dames—
Rose, Ellen, Mary, Margaret—
The sweet old quiet names.

The gravestones show, in long array,
Though white, or green with moss,
How linked in Life and Death are they—
The Shamrock and the Cross.

The Gravestones face the Golden East,
And in the morn they take
The blessing of the Great High Priest,
Before the living wake.

Who was she? Never ask her name;
Her beauty and her grace
Have passed, with her poor little shame,
Into the Silent Place.

In Avonaise, in Avonaise,
Where all is dead and done.
The folk who rest there all their days
Care not for moon or sun.

They care not, when the living pass,
Whether they sigh or smile;
They hear above their graves the grass
That sighs—"A little while!"

A white stone marks her small green bed—
With "Anna" and "Adieu."
Madonna Mary, rest her head
On your dear lap of blue!

THE GREEN HARPER

Once again the music sweet,
With its magical refrain,
Through the noises of the street,
Steals into my heart and brain:
I am like a moonlit tree
Thrilled with silver melody.

Some enchantment in the room
Fills it with a radiance rare,
And a marvellous sweet bloom;
There is glamour in the air,
And my soul is drawn from me
By the wondrous melody.

Long ago, as poets tell,
Dectora, the shining Queen,
Rose and followed Forgael,
Whom men called the Harper Green;

Followed him from Erin's strand
Far and far to Fairyland.

Is it Forgael I hear
  Making music magical?
O Green Harper, do not fear,
  I will follow at thy call!
Over seas or mountains high
I will follow till I die.

Deep and dim in Fairyland,
  Far beyond the Perilous Sea,
Lies the Wood of Broceliande
  Where the haunted waters be—
Haunted lakes and singing streams,
And the high green Rath of Dreams,

There the knight whose sword was sharp,
  Lancelót, in woodland dress,
Walks with Tristram of the Harp,
  Lately come from Lyonesse—
Lyonesse that lies below
All the waves of long ago.

There with beard as white as wool,
  Merlin on the future dreams,
And Blanaid the Beautiful
  Walks beside the singing streams

With fair Queens whose white and red
Loveliness made many dead.

Far-off is that country fair,
But the road is green and gay;
O Green Harper, lead me there,
Ere I take the darker way!

AN OLD TUNE

When I hear the Old Tune sound,
So sweet, yet void of art,
As a grass-blade through the ground,
It pierces through my heart.

O, it pierces through my heart,
The tune without a name,
Like a magic elfin dart,
An arrow of green flame.

And once more, with spirit-glance,
I behold the boys so gay,
And the dark-eyed colleens, dance
Upon the moonlit way.

And I hear the piper play
That sweet old Irish tune,
That can thrill my heart to-day,
Beneath the Irish moon.

O, if I were young and free,
With wealth at my command,
I would give it all to be
Once more in Ireland.

PICTURES

Rushes and heather around me,
A grim, grey rock behind,
And a tall, young gum tree tossing
Its red plumes in the wind,
Like a prince in dark green dressed,
With a waving crimson crest.

A small, clear pool below me,
Between two rocky isles,
With its sunlit face a-quiver
With flashing golden smiles—
Then with mimic rage and din,
A small, white wave comes laughing in.

Three bare-legged lads a-fishing,
With loud and earnest glee;
Like echoes from my boyhood
Their voices sound to me,

Far across the wasted years,
And mine eyes are filled with tears.

White sails on the blue water,
  White wings in the blue air,
And the sun for pleasure shining,
  And beauty everywhere:
These are now the sights I see—
And the world goes well with me.

THE LOST MUSE

I LEFT the crowded city:
  I could no longer rest . . . .
Farewell to comrades witty!
  Good-bye to song and jest!
I left the crowded city
  Upon a silent quest.

There strong men wrought and wrangled
  For room to breathe and be;
Hard men who could have strangled
  The sweet nymph Poesy:
There strong men wrought and wrangled;
  But what were they to me?

The City they are barred in
  So close that no man sees
God walking in His garden
  Among His pleasant trees:

The City they are barred in
By evil destinies.

The houses crouch together
Like dumb beasts terrified:
In vain the golden weather
Gilds all the world outside:
The houses crouch together
As if from God to hide.

I left the crowded City
With all its noise and glare,
Its Greed that knows no pity,
Its Joy and its Despair:
I left the crowded City
To breathe the freer air.

My heart was sore with yearning,
And visions thronged my brain
That like a wheel was turning
And spinning threads of pain:
My heart was sore with yearning
To find my Love again.

Good people, have ye seen her
Who is so fair to see?—
The grass she treads grows greener,
The leaves dance on the tree . . .
Good people, have ye seen her
Who is the world to me?

She sings where'er she passes
The song of sweet Desire;
The eyes of lads and lasses
She fills with tender fire:
She sings where'er she passes
And plays upon a lyre.

I heard the wild swans calling
Where northern rivers flow;
I heard a voice enthralling ,
That well I used to know:
I heard the wild swans calling
Along the sunset-glow.

Upon an island lonely,
Beneath a wild green vine.
For one swift moment only
I saw a vision shine—
Upon an island lonely
Of sighing reed and pine.

Was it my Lady playing
The tunes that charm the trees?
Or but a mist-wreath swaying
And bending in the breeze?—
Was it my Lady playing
Old Orphic melodies?

The reeds with secrets quiver
  Around the lonely isle
Set in the Northern river
  Where Pan reigns yet awhile:
The reeds with secrets quiver—
  And oh, I saw her smile!

"Hast thou some younger Lover,
  O fickle Muse," I cried,
"For whom thou dost uncover
  Thy beauty, like a bride?—
Hast thou some younger Lover
  Who will not be denied?

"And doth he hold thee dearer
  And love thee more than I?
And dost thou draw him nearer
  To thee when ghosts go by?
And doth he hold thee dearer
  Than life? O Muse, reply!"

I heard the pine-trees sighing
  Like mourners stricken sore;
I heard the reeds replying
  In whispers round the shore. . . .
I heard the pine-trees sighing—
  And I heard nothing more.

THE FOREST

Ye who are dwellers in streets where pain of existence is sorest,
Come with me, kinsmen of mine, and leave Care in the City behind—
I am the Brother of Trees, made free of the life of the Forest,
Innocent, thrilled with the sun and alive with the songs of the Wind.

Forth from the City I pass, and I laugh at the fetters that bound me;
O but the forest is green, and my blue-domed world it is fair,
Delicate bird-life and bee-life piping and humming around me,
Laughter of light in the leaves and gladness of life in the air.

Stately they stand in their ranks, my kinsmen, the high and the noble,
Princes and chieftains in plumes, and a people in garments of green;
They with their valour of heart, and their courage that laughs at my troubles,
Knowing the Tree that I was and remembering what I have been.

Beautiful Lady Acacia, with glimmering laughter and gladness,
Shaking your head to a tune that is known but to you and to me;
Dear immemorial music and dearest green days of sweet madness,
Where you were the Lady Acacia and I was your Lover the Tree.

Come with me, come with me, kinsmen! and pass through the wonderful portals:
Deep in the heart of the Forest the mystical story is told;
Luminous shadows of gods, they are there, and the pine-crowned immortals,
All of the Heroes and Stories, and all of the legends of old.

IN A FAR COUNTRY

Beyond the mountains blue,
Banished from the sea
I dream old dreams anew,
And think, old friends, of you,
In a Far Countree.

The wind that bends the trees
Bears no breath of brine;
It has the sough of seas,
But 'tis not the brave salt breeze
That I loved lang syne.

At times in the dark woods,
When the stars are dim,
Its sound is like the rude
March of a multitude
To a battle hymn.

Old friends, old comrades true,
Whom I long to see,
In milk for mountain dew
I drink *Was Hael* to you,
In a Far Countree.

IN ARCADY

The brown hills brood around me, crowned with gums of sombre sheen;
They look like drowsy giants all in smoking-caps of green.
There's not a voice familiar, or a face that's known to me:
The Lord He knows, but I suppose that this is Arcady.

I sit on the verandah at the closing of the day
And compare myself to Ovid in my modest little way—
To Ovid in his exile, dreaming evermore of Rome,
And in vain beseeching Caesar to forgive and take him home.

He dwelt amongst barbarians, and sang his mournful song
Beside the frozen Ister and the Euxine shore along;
But I, midst kindly Irish, dwell upon an upland plain—
And still I long for Sydney and its narrow streets again.

The wheat is cut and garnered, and the ploughing has begun;
The ruddy soil lies naked to the kisses of the sun;
There's harrowing, and burning-off, and other sights to see,
And great potato-digging in the fields of Arcady.

The farmers use, to break the ground, a fine four-furrow plough.
Their ancestors would smile if they could see the Irish now—
For they wrought hard with wooden shares their frugal crops to raise,
When Cecht, the Plough, they worshipped in the old Dedanaan days.

In spite of new machines the world is full of wonder sweet;
There's still as much of magic in the springing of the wheat

As when around the fields at night, the ancient
legends tell,
The Naked Maid in darkness walked and wove a
magic spell.

A homely-looking folk they are, these people of my
kin;
Their hands are hard as horse-shoes, but their hearts
come through the skin;
They are all right well-connected in this land of
Arcady;
And if your name's not Hogan here it must be
Hegarty.

And Nature, God preserve her well, is kindly Irish
too;
The winds croon Irish melodies the swaying gum-
trees through;
And ev'ry little hill about, with green cap cocked and
curled,
Says "Come upon the top of me and look around
the world!'

The stream goes singing on its way, and well I know
the tune—
'Tis "Slantha" in the morning, and at night
"Eileen Aroon";

The magpie warbling in the woods with rich, clear
purple note,
Pretends that he's a blackbird with a Cork brogue
in his throat.

They love the land they live in, all these folk that
I esteem—
But the land they left behind them is an everlasting
dream.
Old Michael Cleary said to me—his age is seventy
seven—
"There's no place like Australia, barrin' Ireland and
Heaven."

There's rest and peace in plenty here, and eggs and
milk to spare;
The scenery is calm and sane, and wholesome is the
air;
The folk are kind, the cows behave like cousins unto
me. . . .
But, please the Lord, on Monday morn, I'm leaving
Arcady.

THE CALL OF THE CITY

THERE is a saying of renown—
"God made the country, man the town."
Well, everybody to his trade!
But man likes best the thing he made.
The town has little space to spare;
The country has both space and air;
The town's confined, the country free—
Yet, spite of all, the town for me.

For when the hills are grey and night is falling,
And the winds sigh drearily,
I hear the city calling, calling, calling,
With a voice like the great sea.

I used to think I'd like to be
A hermit living lonesomely,
Apart from human care or ken,
Apart from all the haunts of men:

Then I would read in Nature's book,
And drink clear water from the brook,
And live a life of sweet content,
In hollow tree, or cave, or tent.

This was a dream of callow Youth
Which always overleaps the truth,
And thinks, fond fool, it is the sum
Of things that are and things to come.
But now, when youth has gone from me,
I crave for genial company.
For Nature wild I still have zest,
But human nature I love best.

I know that hayseed in the hair
Than grit and grime is healthier,
And that the scent of gums is far
More sweet than reek of pavement-tar.
I know, too, that the breath of kine
Is safer than the smell of wine;
I know that here my days are free—
But, ah! the city calls to me.

Let Zimmerman and all his brood
Proclaim the charms of Solitude,
I'd rather walk down Hunter-street
And meet a man I like to meet,

And talk with him about old times,
And how the market is for rhymes,
Between two drinks, than hold commune
Upon a mountain with the moon.

A soft wind in the gully deep
Is singing all the trees to sleep;
And in the sweet air there is balm,
And Peace is here, and here is Calm.
God knows how these I yearned to find!
Yet I must leave them all behind,
And rise and go—come sun, come rain—
Back to the Sorceress again.

For at the dawn or when the night is falling
Or at noon when shadows flee,
I hear the city calling, calling, calling,
Through the long lone hours to me.

"*AUX PAUVRES DIABLES!*"

If ever you happen to pay a
  Short visit when down in the Isles,
To the polychrome town of Noumea
  Where Beauty—bright, black and brown—smiles,
And you feel a desire for some brandy,
  Or absinthe, or whisky, or gin—
In a street, to the market close handy,
  You will notice the Poor Devils' Inn.

It is not a structure as stately
  As some that in Sydney you know,
And if about style you are greatly
  Concerned, it is not *comme il faut;*
Its doors are dirt-brown; its *façade* is
  Of liver-red stucco, and tin;
Yet the liquor you get not so bad is,
  In the same little Poor Devils' Inn.

The haughty imported officials,
The gendarme with pointed moustache,
Have not on its slate their initials
(Its motto is French for "Spot Cash").
But ever the humble and lowly
May fill themselves up to the chin
Very cheaply, and find themselves wholly
At their ease in the Poor Devils' Inn.

The place had for me a strange glamor;
Its windows did wickedly wink;
And, though I was weak in French grammar,
I knew how to ask for a drink.
'Twas vain to put airs on or graces;
Its genial experienced grin
Said, plainer than words—"Here your place is,
Bon gars, in the Poor Devils' Inn.

Behold me, then, sitting, and drinking
Green absinthe and syrup of gum,
And feeling quite Gallic, yet thinking
I would have much rather had rum.
But, *ventrebleu!* one must in foreign
Lands drink their drinks, credit to win—
I spent very nearly a florin
Ere I quitted the Poor Devils' Inn.

And I saw, though it seems like a fable,
A gentleman shabby, yet fine,
Who hammered his heels on the table
Demanding a bottle of wine.
His face had grown harder and thinner—
Who was he that raised such a din?
François Villon, as I am a sinner,
At home in the Poor Devils' Inn!

What brought back this mad rogue from Hades,
Whence seldom a ghost comes at call?
He said he was tired of dead ladies—
Of Laïs, and Thaïs, and all—
So being of that sort whose star is
A guide that leads surely to Sin,
He returned to pick purses in Paris,
And brought up at the Poor Devils' Inn.

He showed me a ballade he'd written
About a bright-eyed popinée,
By the charms of a gendarme death-smitten—
He's sold it to Monsieur Puget,
Who printed it in his smart paper,
And François the coin made to spin,
And cut up the devil's own caper,
With his friends, in the Poor Devils' Inn.

I thought it was kindly and witty
To give to the *café* this name,
Suggestive of jovial pity,
And one more last chance at the game.
And I hope, when a country still stranger
I go to, new life to begin,
By the grace of the Gracious Arranger,
I shall find out a Poor Devils' Inn.

DIES FAUSTUS

With Shoes of Silence shod
He comes, the Pallid God,
Through vales of Night and over hills of Morn;
In scornful silentness
He passes through the press
Of thronging hours, impatient to be born.

At times upon a hill,
We see him standing still,
And in our hearts a sudden bell doth toll;
Then to the vale below
He passes, but we know
He comes, the pale Pursuivant of the Soul.

To-day the sky is fair,
Sweet is the morning air,
The sunlight flows around us like a sea,

Whereon the earth doth float
Like an enchanted boat
Whose sails are filled with winds of melody.

Yet ere the sun goes down,
And lamps gleam in the town,
And Night with stars like jewels fills the sky.
The man who was our friend
Will come to his Life's end—
For, lo, this is the day when he must die.

The day when he with pride
Brought home his new-made bride,
The day made gracious by his man-child's birth,
They are as shadows—dim
And meaningless to him—
Beside this last of all his days on earth.

Our friendship brief is o'er,
He will not see us more,
We shall not meet on any coming day;
For myriad paths there be
Through cold infinity
Whereon men's souls are swept like leaves away.

Yet—ere his spirit goes—
Press to his lips a rose;
Mayhap its scent will bring unto his mind,
In some strange land afar,
The homely little star
Where roses bloomed and there were faces kind.

DISILLUSION

For some forty years, and over,
Poets had with me their way;
And they made me think that Sorrow
Owned the Night and owned the Day;
And the corpse beneath the clover
Had a hopeful word to say.

And they made me think that Sorrow
Was the Shadow in the Sun;
And they made me think To-morrow
Was a gift to everyone:
And the days I used to borrow,
Till my credit now is done.

And they told me softly, sweetly,
That, when Life had lost its glee,
I could be consoled completely

By the Forest or the Sea;
And they wrote their rhymes so neatly
That they quite deluded me.

But when Sorrow is at sorest,
And the heart weeps silently,
Is there healing in the Forest?
Is there solace in the Sea?
And the God whom thou adorest
Has He any help for thee?

Does it sooth the spent man dying
That the stars are shining bright
O'er the field where he is lying?
And the moon, with all her light,
Does she help his bare soul flying
Through the vast and lonely Night?

Give to me the grasp of true man,
Though his state be high or low,
Give to me the kiss of woman—
Let your Seas and Forests go:
There is nothing but the human
Touch can heal the human woe.

THE OTHER SIDE

HERE, on this green old earth
Which is my dwelling place,
I share the grief and mirth
And glory of my race.

For me the roses bloom,
For me the sweet birds sing;
I am the Prince to whom
Their fruits the seasons bring.

I laugh with winds at play;
I wanton with the wave;
"This earth of mine," I say,
"My cradle is, and grave."

And, in the silence vast
Of night, my spirit sees
Grey phantoms of the past,
And ancient tragedies.

I am of cave-men bred
  Who looked upon the Flood:
The thoughts of all the dead
  Are stirring in my blood.

I come of that high strain,
  The men who thought and did,
Who raised the Gothic fane
  And built the Pyramid.

O dead men, long out-thrust
  From light and life and song—
O kinsmen in the dust,
  Your grasp is stark and strong!

It draws me evermore
  To banks of dusky green,
Whence Charon plies his oar
  Unto a shore unseen.

And so when daylight dies
  And stars begin to gleam,
My deeds and prayers and sighs
  I send across the stream.

I go no more on quests
  Of profit, near or far,
My dearest interests
  Across the Dark Stream are.

For day by day I feel,
  Amidst this world of men,
A grander Commonweal
  Claims me as citizen.

Is it but all a dream
  That, when this life is done,
Across the Stygian stream
  There shines a fairer sun?

I know not, and maybe
  The Only God is Chance:
Yet Charon looks at me
  With strange significance.

KEEPSAKES

This world of ours, all garmented in green,
The preachers say is but a passing scene.

The things we know and love are none of ours,
But lent us for a time alone. The flowers,

The waving woods, and many-laughing sea,
Are keepsakes for the Race that is to be.

And yet I know a meadow whence the Lark
Rises, and sings at dawn above the dark.

I know a tree that in the early Spring
Blooms into rose-winged birds that soar and sing.

I know the still sea in the morning wan,
Like a bright steel sword soft breathed upon.

I know the secret of the World's Desire
That hides within the red heart of the fire.

I have some friends—none better man could own—
And must I leave them, and go forth alone?

I saw a statue in the white moonshine—
The crowned white Mother and the Child divine;

The Mother and the Child, with calm command,
Benignly gazed upon the sleeping land.

The Preacher says this world so gay and green,
So full of glamor, is a passing scene.

I wish that, when Death closes my dim eyes,
These keepsakes I may take to Paradise.

SORROW GO DOWN WITH THE SUN!

When a man is chivvied from east to west,
And heckled and harried the livelong day,
When the evening comes it should bring him rest—
Sorrow go down with the sun, I say!

In the street, in the mart, when high is the sun
We fight for our lives and we cheat and lie;
But let it be over when day is done—
Sorrow go down with the sun, say I!

Cease, O singers, the Labour hymn,
For hard enough is our weary way;
Give us some peace when the light grows dim—
Sorrow go down with the sun, I say!

I have made my bed, and my way I keep,
As I shall keep it until I die;
When the Night comes with her chalice of sleep—
Sorrow go down with the sun, say I!

REMONSTRANCE

When Night comes I am pierced with arrows keen:
My Conscience stands and shoots them at my heart—
"Think of thy sins!" I say, "I did my part—
Gods knows, He only, what they might have been."

I had no quarrel with the world of old,
No trouble with the glad green world had I,
I simply asked for leave to live and die,
And fish, and read old tales by poets told.

And now I stand with back against the wall,
A beetle pinned against the wall of Fate,
I think if God is, as I think Him, Great—
That he will wipe my score out once for all.

Is there no chance for him who sees no chance,
No hope for him who feels no sure-set hope,
Beyond the starry regions and the scope
Of Heaven and Earth, and Time and Circumstance?

There is; for God is just, and can discern
That I had but a little interlude—
Some forty years or so—to learn the good,
Which He had all eternity to learn.

VISIONS OF THE RAIN

Last night I lay awake and heard the rain—
In that dark hour before the break of day,
When life burns low—when phantom fingers play
A sad, soft tune upon the window-pane.

The moon was like that sweet drowned virgin face
That floated down the Tiber's current slow
When Nero reigned, long centuries ago,
All dim with grief, yet glorious with grace.

The wind went moaning through the trees below,
And like a lost child cried, then wildly laughed;
The grateful lily in the garden quaffed
The wine of Heaven from her cup of snow.

Yea, far away, beyond the Mountains Blue,
On many an ample field, on many a plain,
Made glad by the rich succour of the rain,
The harvest, like the gourd of Jonah, grew.

But I was gazing on another sight;
I saw the gaslit silent streets that shone
Like Hell's sad streets by Heaven's tears rained upon,
When God was merciful on Calvary's night.

And, at lane-corners where the gaslight gleamed,
I saw wan faces flushed with haggard mirth—
Alas, poor devils! they had found on Earth
A Hell more terrible than monks have dreamed.

. . . .

THE END OF THE WORLD

In deeps of space alone,
  Beyond the starry sea,
God sate upon His throne;
  The Earth was on His knee.

Musingly He said,
  Turning the small globe o'er,
"I tire of Men I made;
  They please me now no more.

"I gave them this green earth,
  With all its streams and seas,
Whereon to dwell in mirth,
  And pleasantness and ease.

"I made the sun arise
  Each morning in the East;
I lit with stars the skies
  At night, as for a feast.

"And, when to Heav'n above
For more gifts they did call,
I sent my Angel Love
With my best gift of all.

"They are consumed with greed,
And eaten up with pride;
Each little, paltry creed
Counts *Me* upon its side.

"And, when they go to fight,
Each party calls on ME
To aid the Right—*its* Right—
And give it victory."

Then God the Earth surveyed
Once more, and thus spake He:
"I tire of Man I made"—
And brushed it off his knee.

With all its glories ripe
The Earth passed, like a spark
Blown from a sailor's pipe
Into the hollow dark.

FAITH

Faith shuts her eyes
  Poor self-deceiver!
The last god dies
  With the last believer.

PHILOSOPHY

Life is a web with many broken ends—
  Then, why, O friend, be sad?
Good is not near so good as it pretends
  Bad is not half so bad.

ST. FRANCIS II

I learnt the language of the birds,
  A new St. Francis I would be;
But, when I understood their words—
  The birds were preaching unto me.

I.H.S.

The Ancient World was hard and wise,
Its fierce old gods hold still their sway—
Murder, and Greed, and Lust and Lies,
We call them in this latter day.

Hawk-beaked and hungry-hearted gods,
And unforgiving deities;
Their sceptres were revengeful rods;
They held the Future on their knees.

O Pagan ancestors of mine,
This hand that writes shall soon be dust,
But we shall drink celestial wine
Together yet—for God is just.

One night my heart was filled with gloom,
And then there came—I know not how—
A Shining Presence in the room
Who kissed me softly on the brow.

There is a steep and narrow street
That in my waking dreams I see,
And One walks there with bleeding feet
Upon his way to Calvary.

The Milky Way, whose star-worlds' gem
The night, is but a breath—a name—
To that small street, Jerusalem,
Which is your Glory and your Shame.

He was not by the nations hailed
As Saviour of the World; not He,
But on His Symbol he was nailed—
An Everlasting guarantee.

And though they were so hard and wise
I see, the gulf of years across,
With wringing hands, and weeping eyes,
The old gods following the Cross.

Who fears dark Death and After-Death
He has not heard your message free,
O Carpenter of Nazareth!
O Beachcomber of Galilee!

A VISION OF CALVARY

I HAD an evil dream:
The Great Sea moaned for breath;
The Great Green Earth did seem
Grey in the grasp of Death.

The sky was dark with doom,
But, in the vault afar,
There glittered through the gloom,
A single smiling star.

Upon the Mount of Loss
I saw a vision dread—
Satan astride the Cross
In hose and doublet red.

With mockery and with mirth
His sombre visage shone;
The Kingdoms of the Earth
He seemed to gaze upon.

He gave the royal sign,
  And looked down with sad scorn
Upon the Head Divine,
  Crowned with its Crown of Thorn.

Then to that Figure Wan
  Approached a tall full-fed
Roman Centurion—
  A mitre on his head.

He shed no useless tear,
  But, cold and solemn-eyed,
With a long crozier-spear
  He pierced the Saviour's side.

And from that side there ran,
  Most wondrous to behold,
Through all the lands of Man
  A stream of ruddy gold.

Through long dim centuries
  It ran, a river wide,
And men with chalices
  Sat down its banks beside.

Men clad in mystic gear—
  Mitre and shovel-hat—
For many and many a year
  They quaffed it and grew fat.

Still on the Mount of Loss,
  In evil dreams I see
Satan astride the Cross,
  Smiling in mockery.

But in the vault afar,
  Gleaming the Cross above,
I see the Smiling Star
  That is the Star of Love.

GELIMER

Gelimer, King of the Vandals,
In mountain-prison pent,
To Pharas, the Roman captain,
A message of sorrow sent.

He had been Lord of Carthage,
The splendid Daughter of Tyre,
And he wrote thus—"Send me, O Pharas,
A loaf of bread and a lyre."

He would comfort his heart that stifled
Midst Moorish swine in a stye,
By singing of Genseric's glories,
And his own good days gone by.

Gelimer, King of the Vandals,
Died in the ancient years;
Yet his words so quaint and simple
Have filled mine eyes with tears.

And I think I will send this message,
His case being nearly mine—
"I have a lyre—but send me
A loaf and a jar of wine."

FORTY-YEAR

Forty times over let Michaelmas pass—
Grizzling hair the brain doth clear—
Then you know a boy is an ass,
Then you know the worth of a lass,
Once you have come to Forty-year.

* * *

Dear God! it seems but yesterday
I read these rhymes of Thackeray,
And thought their view of life so fine
That in a book I wrote them down—
A very cherished book of mine
Now tattered, battered, old and brown—
Its fly-leaf dated—"Seventy-Nine."

That old book makes my saddest fun.
Its lists of great works—to be done:
Its boldly chaptered histories;

Its poems that would nations bind;
  Its epics and its tragedies
To thrill the cold heart of mankind—
  It has monopoly of these.

Where now is all the courage fine,
The wealth of impulse and design,
  That I had then at easy call?
Where is the resolution stern
  I had that scorned to fail or fall?
The faith that evermore would burn?—
  I think, indeed, it has them all.

I was a Poet, then, forsooth,
And mourned in verse my vanished youth,
  And sang of Life upon the wane;
And with full many a grievous trope,
  And rhyme that would not hold the rain,
Sat keening o'er the grave of Hope,
  And years that could not come again.

What tears—of mourning ink—I shed
Because Leuconoë was dead!
  For she was fair—as well might be

A maiden out of moonshine made.
I never saw Leuconoë
In life—but loving was my trade,
And fairer than the moon was she.

Sweet Margaret, sweet Isabel
Were living maids whom I loved well.
Yet vaguely to my memory
They come, though neither one is dead,
But married—which means dead to me.
Yet I shall lose my heart and head
Ere I forget Leuconoë.

In those old days—I mean those young
Old days—I thought my harp was strung
To saddest melodies alone;
And darkling did I muse on Death,
And weep for youth I had not known—
While all around me was the breath
Of youth's own roses newly-blown.

And, looking back, so strange appears
The wake of my swift-passing years,
I sometimes think that I began

With Autumn, and have come to Spring,
As fabled rivers backward ran.
What did I know of anything,
Ere I was Forty—and a Man?

The mystic dawns, the sunset strange
That glorified sea-rim and range
In those past days—where have they fled?
The noons supreme of blue and gold,
The nights with starry secrets dread—
What realm doth now their glories hold?
I keep them in my heart and head.

Yea, I have gathered all my years
With all their laughter and their tears,
And all that was of me a part
In Christendom and Pagandom—
And, will my goddess backward start?
Ah, let her take one red rose from
The red-rose garden of my heart!

She smiles: she will! My Thackeray
I love you as in olden day;
But still it does to me appear
A Boy who courts is not an ass—
And I prefer to wine or beer
The red lips of a laughing lass,
Though I have come to Forty-Year.

A NEW *RÉGIME*

When I am young and strong again,
And ended is this sickness sore
That chills my heart and numbs my brain,
I will not wasted days deplore,
But set the days that are to be
Upon a higher, nobler plane,
And make my friends feel proud of me—
When I am young and strong again.

For straightway I will break the chain
Of evil habits, and be free
To live the life without a stain,
Approved by calm Philosophy.
I cannot what is spent restore,
And barren sorrow I disdain;
But I will play the fool no more
When I am young and strong again.

The chimes at midnight all in vain
Shall ring; for me their charm is o'er;
My nights shall sober be and sane,
Unlike the mad, glad nights of yore.
And I will keep good company;
My only drink shall be champagne—
Which is the real eau de vie—
When I am young and strong again.

The castle that I built in Spain—
An edifice sublime to see —
Its roof, I hear, lets in the rain,
That rots the rich old tapestry.
It soon will be a ruin hoar,
With Madam Owl for chatelaine;
I shall not build on Spanish shore
When I am young and strong again.

I had a ship—La Belle Hélène
Was, in my thoughts, the name she bore—
I fear she met the hurricane,
And lies upon the ocean-floor.
She was a gallant argosy,
Well filled with hopes—drowned in the main.
I shall not send my hopes to sea
When I am young and strong again.

When I am young and strong again
  How fresh and fair the world will be!
The birds will sing in blither strain,
  And roses bloom in rivalry;
And friends grow dearer than before!
  I would not change with Charlemagne
My lot, were he still Emperor,
  When I am young and strong again.

When I am young and strong again,
  And ended is this sickness sore,
What if some wrinkles I retain,
  They are the signs of trouble o'er.
Farewell! the time has come for me
  To sleep like Ogier the Dane,
Or Merlin, in his hollow tree,
  Till I am young and strong again.

HYGEIA

Goddess, blithe and young and fair,
With the brow so broad and noble,
And the eyes undimmed by trouble,
And the lips that laugh at care,
And the brown limbs fleet and free—
Hast thou quite forgotten me?

Maid divine, dost thou not mind
When we raced the streams together,
In the mad, glad winter-weather,
While thy hair streamed on the wind
Like a flying flame of gold?—
Ah, the vanished days of old!

Lady, bright, dost thou forget
When we wandered, we two only,
By the side of waters lonely,
From sunrising to sunset,

And I made a rhyme for thee
Full of magic melody?

When the morn's flag was unfurled,
Thou wert with me, rapture bringing,
While my heart a song was singing
Of the Beauty of the World —
Does the morn no longer glow?
Was it all so long ago?

On the purple hills afar
Are thy swift feet gleaming, gliding?
Or art thou o'er grey plains riding
Underneath the Morning Star?
Maid divine, my fear is sore
That I ne'er shall see thee more.

THE OLD MEN SIT BY ME

The moon a silver vision is, the rising of the sun
Is still the golden miracle it was in years ago;
The lily is as lovely in her robes that are not spun,
The rose is still as radiant as the rose I used to know.
My eyes the beauty of the world can yet with rapture see—
But, wheresoever I may go,
The Old Men sit by Me.

The young men pass me on the boat with pleasant nod or jest,
And talk and laugh amongst themselves of sport, or girls, or drink;
They seem to think such themes for me have lost all interest.
I'd like to let them see that I am not the age they think;

But what's the use of trying to look careless, young and free,
When, talking on things dead and gone,
The Old Men sit by Me.

They somehow seem to think that I no longer should be gay,
But take life very seriously and wear a solemn face;
Because my brow is wrinkled and my hair a trifle grey,
I should (they seem to fancy) drop out gently from the race.
But there is that within me which doth proudly disagree
With such superannuation, though
The Old Men sit by Me.

'Tis true I am a little bald behind and grey before;
The lines about my eyes are somewhat deep, perhaps—what then?
Young men who are both bald and grey, I know them by the score;
And wrinkles merely do not age a sprightly citizen—
I used to think that Trouble left me them as legacy.
But still the fact remains that now
The Old Men sit by Me.

But, spite of Time, the Thief of Youth, till health
and hope be gone,
I shall see the beauty of the world as in the years
of yore.
I may grow as bald as Caesar and as grey as
Wellington,
Yet while my heart is light and young I care for
nothing more;
And, therefore, in the train, or on the boat upon
the sea,
I am not old, my masters, though
The Old Men sit by Me.

ILL

Four walls and a door,
  And a window small;
Yet now I see more
Than ever before
  I could see at all.

The wall-paper fair,
  With it's queer volutes,
A devil-may-care
Bohemian air
  Plays with harps and flutes.

The flutes to the white
  Of the ceiling play;
And merry and bright
As quivering light
  Goes the march so gay.

O, Harps of the green
  With your strings of gold
And music so keen,
I know what ye mean,
  For the tale is old—

Four walls but no door
  And no window small;
Shall I then see more
Than ever before
  I could see at all?

THE GREY HOUR

The pallid Morn with face aghast
Walked on the meadows drear;
Her face was in the river glassed,
A cold, white face of fear.

The trees were still; there was no stir
Of grass blades on the lawn,
And the candles near the dying man
Burned yellow in the dawn.

The ghost set forth upon its way,
And heard no farewell sound
But the crowing of a distant cock
And the baying of a hound.

TO MY SOUL

Be patient, O my Soul: the prison bars
That check thy flight
Will break beneath the sun, or silent stars,
Some day or night.

Be still and wait; the Body seems to reign
In pride serene;
But darkly in its pathway crouches Pain,
With poniard keen.

Grieve not when it is grieved, nor, when it errs—
'Tis naught to thee;
Its sins and sorrows are but ministers
To set thee free.

Behold, it is the bondslave to the Earth
From which it springs;
Its laugh is loudest in the Masque of Mirth—
It loves all things

That make the world seem beautiful and gay,
But live not long—
The joy of Spring-time and the dawn of day,
Wine, Women, Song.

Red-tongued it rushes, like a hound unchained,
To hunt Desire;
But thou remainest still a proud, unstained
Spirit of fire.

It has no part in thee; thou hast no mate
To share thy throne.
Thou art invincible, inviolate,
White and alone.

Dost thou not feel in rapt imaginings,
In dreams sublime,
The sovran sweep of thy immortal wings
Through Space and Time?

The stars and suns whose magnitude appal
Shall seem to thee
Like twinkling lights of some small port of call,
Seen far at sea.

Be still and wait, O caged Immortal Bird!
Thou shalt be free;
Not all in vain hast thou the voices heard
Of lives to be.

Be still and wait! No Being that draws breath
Thy bounds can set;
Though God Himself forget thee, Faithful Death
Will not forget.

FINIS

High-hearted was he as the lark,
Whose song of triumph spurns the dark.

The scarlet music in his veins
Ran glowing like seraphic strains.

The dawn appeared for him alone.
The day, the world, were all his own.

For him the sun kissed lovingly
The silken-robed Sultana Sea.

The hours to him were golden sands:
He scattered them with both his hands.

The thrill of ecstasy that runs
Through song of lark, through light of suns,

Through grasp of hand in comradeship,
Through kiss of woman—heart on lip—

He knew and loved it passing well.
Then on his soul a shadow fell—

The Shadow of a Shape of Fear,
That made the golden daylight drear.

Its hollow eyes were dim and dull;
A fool's cap crowned its grinning skull.

It stood a moment by his side,
He looked, and laughed—and laughing, died.

W. C. Penfold & Co. Ltd., Printers, 183 Pitt Street, Sydney.

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